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# FROM MELBOURNE TO MOSCOW

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LANGENDRITO, A FAMOUS JAVANESE ACTRESS.

*Frontispiece.*

# FROM MELBOURNE TO MOSCOW

*By*

G. C. DIXON

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# AUTHOR'S NOTE

IT is less than six months since I completed a journey from Melbourne to London via the East Indies, China, Korea, Japan, Manchuria, Siberia and Russia; but already much that I wrote about has changed. The building of the Singapore Base has been resumed; Sun Yat-sen, that lost leader of lost causes, is dead; Chang Tso-lin, the War Lord of Manchuria, has made his bid for power, crushed his hated rival, and retired, in the face of unexpected obstacles, to Mukden; and the Soviet Government has outwitted or outbribed all other parties and gained control of the great Chinese Eastern Railway. In Russia, too, there have been changes. All the world knows now what I had difficulty in making people believe —that Trotsky has fallen; and the unrest which, six months ago, was so marked amongst the peasants, has forced the Communists to concede certain privileges, including virtual ownership of the land they occupy.

For a time I contemplated recasting certain chapters to permit of some account of these developments. But realizing that the process of revision, once begun, would never end, I left the book as it was written.

Much of the material in this book has been published in Australia and New Zealand by a group of newspapers including the *Herald* (Melbourne), the *Sun* (Sydney), the *Daily Mail* (Brisbane), the

*Advertiser* (Adelaide), the *Mercury* (Hobart), and the *New Zealand Herald* (Wellington).

Acknowledgments should also be made to the *London Magazine*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Observer*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* (London), the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Daily Province* (Vancouver).

I am also indebted to other journals which have flattered my vanity by republishing my articles and my delicacy by avoiding the offer of money.

G. C. DIXON.

LONDON,
*March*, 1925.

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# CHAPTER I

## I DECIDE ON A JOURNEY

Peculiar Behaviour of some Friends—A Difficult Question—What's Wrong with Australia?—The Importance of Being Born in Kalamazoo (Mich.).

"FINE, my boy, fine," said my friends. "Tell me, where are you going?"

"Oh, the Far East, you know: China, Japan and so on; and perhaps Russia," I replied vaguely, with what nonchalance I could command.

"Splendid! Wish I were coming with you. Wonderful place the East. No, never been there, but everybody says so. Rickshaws, and Chinese restaurants, and sing-song girls and geishas. My boy, I envy you. If I were twenty years younger . . . But Russia . . . no, no, take my advice and don't go to Russia. . . . Well, in case I never see you again . . ."

Enemies became cordial and jubilant.

"Ah, Russia," they repeated thoughtfully, as they mentally measured me for a Red coffin, "dangerous place, Russia. Never know what may happen in Russia, do you? Well, I wish you everything you deserve. *Good-bye.*"

For weeks this sort of thing went on, friends still wishing to God they were twenty years younger, enemies touching lightly on small-pox, leprosy, cholera, bubonic plague, the astonishingly dexterous stranglers of the East, the peculiar and dangerous redness of Red Russia, and kindred

subjects, until one day some one—in fairness it must be said that she was only a child—asked me an intelligent question.

"Why," she said earnestly, "why are you going away?"

Now I knew perfectly well why I was going away. To sail the Eastern seas in the wake of Drake and Tasman; to drink in the perfumes and gorgeous colours of the Spice Islands; to poke in odd corners and strange byways of old China and Japan; to walk the streets of Peking once walked by Messer Marco Polo; to stand on the Great Wall of China where Kubla Khan may once have stood, and follow, as far as the eye could, that river of masonry that rises in the heart of Asia and flows on and on, across deserts and garden provinces, mountains and rivers, to the Yellow Sea; to cross Siberia, that land of ill-repute and sombre story; to walk the streets of Moscow, to explore the Kremlin and stand in that historic Church of St. Basil in the Red Square—all these things I wanted to do, and a hundred others. And so, with the wanderlust upon me, and strange names ringing in my ears, I gazed absently upon that wondering child and said in our rousing British way, "Oh, just for a change, you know."

Between ourselves, I had other reasons. Secretly I considered that I was seeking Life, Colour, Adventure. But I found it a little hard to say so, harder still to explain why I, an Australian with a continent to roam in, could not find these things at home.

In the last minute rush of getting away, all the more crowded because of my lifelong habit of methodically and resolutely neglecting all essentials, the question remained unanswered. But

at last the preliminaries were over. The 590-mile journey to Sydney was behind me; I had watched, a little sadly, Sydney Heads fading into the milky blue of the horizon; and then, for the first time, I realized that the wearisome business preparations, the leave-taking, the perplexities as to route, and so on, were all over, that at last I was on the way. And filled with a sudden exultation, I threw out my arm in splendid gesture and echoed great Cæsar's cry: *jacta est alea*—the die is cast.

Or at least I would have if I had not seen a steward looking.

* * * * *

**II. In their own Country**

Brisbane was behind us, Thursday Island ahead, and steadily the *Marella* steamed northward through the smooth waters that lie between the mainland and the Great Barrier Reef. Every day the sun grew warmer, the breezes softer and more caressing, the islands greener, the vegetation more tropical. To port lay the Queensland coast; past the other rail slid a maze of islands which might have been built up by the Almighty to the design of R.L.S. Romance was in the very air. Then why, as the little girl had said, was I going to the trouble of seeking it elsewhere? Why, for that matter, did most Australians seek it elsewhere?

Lying there in the warm sunshine, I resigned myself to indolent contemplation, but could find no satisfactory answer.

And yet the problem is real enough. Every Australian writer, publisher and bookseller knows that the Australian public, apart from a section which supports one cheap series, does not want Australian books; and theatrical managers will tell you that

no Australian play, regardless of its merits, is what the profession calls a box-office proposition. People may live in Australia and revere Australia, but when they want amusement they turn to plays from the West End and Broadway, and novels about bad men from Skagway and sheikhs who have learned to fox-trot divinely on the sands and owe their Oxford accent (as transpires in the sensational *dénouement*) to a French-Egyptian mother. There are men writing fiction in Australia to-day whose work, if not exactly masterly, is well up to the standard of the popular novel elsewhere, or even the average best seller. But I doubt if there is one who is making a tolerable living at it. They have to supplement their royalties with hack work while the comforts of this world—the Rolls-Royces and the valets and the houses in Fifth Avenue and Park Lane—go to the people who, from their studies in Chelsea or Kalamazoo (Mich.), deal in desert passions and the doings of good, red-blooded, two-fisted fellows in places where Men Are Men.

For this there can be only two explanations. Either the Ethel Dells and the Clarence H. Mulfords write better—which, as Euclid would have said, in his downright fashion, is absurd ; or the Australian reader, forgetting Charles Reade, Marcus Clarke and " Rolf Boldrewood," has accepted the convention that Australia is not one of those countries in which self-respecting novelists of to-day find inspiration. India, for instance, and Japan (more especially since Lafcadio Hearn and Pierre Loti), and Egypt, and Africa, and even the newer regions like Texas and Alaska, and (since the rise of the Tango and Señor Ibañez) the Argentine Republic.

Why? What is it that decides, for the average man and woman, whether a country is or is not a fit dwelling for Romance? Is it the geography of the place? Then Australia has deserts where even Mr. Rudolph Valentino would have scope; grassy plains in no way inferior to the prairies of Wyoming or the steppes of Siberia; forests as dense as those of Canada and trees far bigger; mountains and lakes, in the Blue Mountains, Gippsland and Tasmania, not unlike those of Switzerland; tropical wildernesses which suggest the Indies or Brazil.

Is it (as it very reasonably might be) historical atmosphere that counts? Then Australia, though a young country and the only continent in which blood has never been spilled in war, has had its share of the stirring deeds, and brave endeavour, and mute suffering, and pageantry and colour that are the stuff of which most histories are made. Botany Bay, Norfolk Island, Port Arthur and Macquarie Harbour, with their ruins and grim memories; the Rum Rebellion, the Mutiny of the *Bounty*, the settlement of Pitcairn Island, the marvellous voyage of Bligh, and all the other purple patches of a period which, for dramatic interest and vivid colour, will bear comparison with the planting days in the Old Dominion; the two gallant sailors who risked death a score of times in their tiny cockle shell, only to find it at the latter end on shore—Flinders on the very day his great book of discovery appeared, poor Bass (if a doubtful legend is to be believed) as a captive in the silver mines of Peru; the long line of explorers who thirsted and starved (and in a number of cases died) in the desert wastes in order that the heritage of posterity might be a little fuller for the sacrifice; the tragic affair of the Eureka Stockade, with an obscure

miner playing not unworthily the rôle of a diggings Hampden ; the still more tragic conflict between black man and white, which in the State of Tasmania has resulted in the complete extinction of a race—a poor race, admittedly, but still human, even as you and I ; the great gold rushes and the stories of Broken Hill, Mount Morgan, Mount Bischoff and Mount Lyell—is there in all this no Romance ? If not, then let the word be expunged from the dictionary of the novelist and tacked on where it belongs—to the efforts of the scenario writer, reports of *mésalliances* in the society papers, and " Tarzan of the Apes."

All this I felt, and more, as we skirted Australia's northern fringe ; but the fact remained that I was going, and I knew just why. The world having agreed that Australia was a boring land of sand, perpetual drought, devastating floods, plagues of rabbits much given to devouring wire fences, and large, hairy men—the hairiness of Australians in fiction is a subject on which I feel rather strongly—the world having settled all this, I say, I had bowed before tradition, as many a braver soul had done before, and was seeking not only recreation but material elsewhere.

A really strong-minded genius, I knew, would have doggedly stayed at home, dramatized the neighbours and forced the world to come to him. But was I that sort of fellow ? . . . Something seemed to tell me I was not.

## CHAPTER II

### THE STORY OF LIZARD ISLAND

Mary Watson and her Island Home—The Raid—A Night of Horror—The Flight in the Tank—Thirst—A Bush Mystery—How Ah Sam Died.

IT was not long before these random reflections acquired some sort of point. At noon that very day Captain Mortimer, the high-spirited mariner whose habit of winning deck games nearly maddened the already melancholy Mark Twain, invited us to assemble in the lounge, and, pointing to a low island with nothing but a hummock or two to distinguish it from a score of others, told us the story of Mary Watson and Lizard Island. It is just possible that you have already read it, wretchedly mutilated, in de Rougemont's *The Fatal Pearl;* but I was rather pleased (as is the way with men who find a theory unexpectedly supported) to discover that not one of a score of Australians on the boat had as much as heard her name. Like most Australians, they could have told you something about Flora Macdonald, one of a million women who have risked and given much for the sake of a handsome face; or Lady Alice Lisle, the aged and feeble lady who had a sort of negative fame thrust on her by a hanging judge; or even Mary Ambree, whose reputation has looked up a bit since Kipling borrowed a title from the old ballad. But not one of these good and loyal Australians had ever heard of a fellow-countrywoman

who, had she lived in any other land, would have won immortality in song and story, and supplied inspiration, not before it was needed, to the army of writers for the screen.

The romance of Lizard Island begins in 1880, when a young school teacher of Cooktown, in Northern Queensland, married Captain R. F. Watson, a bêche-de-mer fisher, and went to share his home amongst the coral isles and treacherous waters of the Great Barrier Reef. Captain Watson had built a home on one of these green dots, with a little garden, a plantation and a plant for curing his hauls ; and he used to leave her, with only two Chinese employees for company and protection, while he sailed away to seek his living. A lonely life it must have been for her, but she bore it without complaint, and, with the birth of a child, seems to have attained to something approaching complete happiness.

Then, out of the clear blue sky of an Australian spring, came the calamity that overwhelmed her. On September 1, 1881, Captain Watson set sail for Knight Island, some two hundred miles to the northward ; and a few weeks later a party of blacks, engaged on one of their periodical fishing expeditions, put off from the mainland in their canoes and, by evil chance, landed at Lizard Island. They found one of the Chinese working in the plantation, killed him and saved his body for a feast on the mainland, where a black boy long afterwards found his pigtail ; and then they turned their attention to the house. What follows is recorded by Mrs. Watson in her diary.

Sept. 30.—(She writes) Natives down on the beach at 7 p.m. Fired off rifle and revolver and they went away.

Oct. 1.—Natives (four) speared Ah Sam in four places on the right side and three on the shoulder. Got three spears from the natives. Saw 10 men altogether.

Mrs. Watson helped the desperately wounded Chinese indoors, bathed and dressed his wounds as best she could, and then, with a revolver in her hand and a Snider across her knees, settled down to defend the house, unaided, against the savages outside. There were times, in that night of horror, when she thought she could hear whispers and soft footsteps, and there must have been many a chilling moment when death and the oven seemed very near. But the dawn came at last, and she was still alive and still sane.

But the position was still desperate. Daylight showed that the blacks were near at hand, and Mrs. Watson decided that, though it was almost impossible to escape, to remain meant certain death. Her judgment was confirmed when the blacks attacked again. Once more she drove them off by rifle fire, and this time they disappeared ; but she surmised—quite correctly, as the looted house afterwards showed—that they had gone for reinforcements and would soon return with a horde that could not fail to overwhelm her pitiful defence. The little party must leave that day or perish.

But how, without a boat? Her eyes fell on the trepang boiler, which had once been half a ship's tank. She improvised a pair of crude paddles ; dragged this grotesque vessel, with the aid of the terribly wounded but very gallant Ah Sam, to the water's edge ; loaded it with food, water, clothes, the guns and her money, jewels and diary ; and then they put to sea—the craziest craft in history manned by a woman, a baby and a dying Chinese.

What followed is best told by Mrs. Watson.

Oct. 2.—Left Lizard Island in tank. Got three or four miles from the Lizards.

Oct. 4.—Made for the sand bank off the Lizards, but could not reach it. Got on a bare reef.

Oct. 5.—Remained on the reef all day on the look-out for a boat, but saw none.

Oct. 6.—Very calm morning. Able to pull the tank up to an island with three small mountains on it. Ah Sam went ashore to try to find water.

Oct. 7.—Made for another island 4 or 5 miles from the one spoken of yesterday. Ashore, but could not find any water. Cooked some rice and clam fish. Moderate S.E. breeze. Stayed here all night. Saw a schooner bound north. Hoisted Ferrier's [the baby's] white and pink wrapper, but did not answer us.

Oct. 8.—Changed anchorage, as the wind was freshening. Went down to a kind of little lake on the same island. (This done last night.) Remained here all day looking out for a boat. Did not see any. Very cold night; blowing very hard. No water.

Oct. 9.—Brought the tank ashore as far as possible with this morning's tide. Made camp all day under the trees. Blowing very hard. No water. Gave Ferrier a dip in the sea (he is showing symptom of thirst) and I took a dip myself. Ah Sam and self very parched with thirst.

Oct. 10.—Ferrier very bad with inflammation. Very much alarmed. No fresh water and no more milk but condensed. Self very weak. Really thought I would have died last night (Sunday).

Oct. 11.—Still all alive. Ferrier very much better this morning. Still feeling very weak. I think it will rain to-day. Clouds very heavy.

But the rain which would have meant life to her baby and herself—probably nothing could have saved Ah Sam—did not fall, and when the next day dawned bright and clear she must have known that the end was very near. That day she wrote :

Oct. 12.—No rain. Morning fine weather. Ah Sam preparing to die. Have not seen him since 9. Ferrier more cheerful. Self not feeling at all well. Have not seen a boat of any description. No water. Nearly dead with thirst.

That, with its stoically bald "not feeling at all well," was the last entry. Any other woman in a million would have collapsed, perhaps lost her reason, in that nightmare at Lizard Island and the agonies of thirst that followed; but it was characteristic of Mrs. Watson that she had her mind and her nerves under iron control and methodically kept her diary to the last. It was characteristic of her also that in all those days of horror she set down not one word of complaint or railing against Fate, not even an appeal to the God who seemed to have forgotten her. In other lands and other ages there have been thousands of women more brilliant, thousands who have, by reason of birth or environment, played a greater and more spectacular rôle in history. But still I say that with the end of humble Mary Watson Australia lost one of its greatest women and the world one of its finest and choicest spirits.

* * * * *

## II. The End of the Passage

The epilogue to the drama is soon told. The attack on Lizard Island and the disappearance of Mrs. Watson were reported on the mainland, Captain Watson was found and notified, and a party, in which Captain Watson joined, searched scores of islands where the fugitives might be sheltering. But week after week went by and no trace was found; and the mystery was deepened by rumours that a white woman was living with the mainland blacks. For a time it was thought that the outcast, if she were not some phantom of a black man's superstitious mind, might be Mrs. Watson; but this hideous fear was dispelled when the Byerstown police arrested the woman and found her to be a

stranger. Who was she ? What evil star had led her to these wandering savages, lowest of all the races upon earth ? Had she been taken prisoner and reduced to such degradation that she feared to face the pity or contempt in the eyes of her own kind ? Or had she joined this nomad tribe of her own free will to gratify some degenerate habit or some atavistic urge ? No one will ever know. In the flight of the police from the blacks she was thrown from her horse and seriously injured. She was taken to the Cooktown Hospital and died there ; and her grim secret, whatever it may have been, died with her.

There is some melancholy satisfaction to be derived from the fact that it was not so with Mary Watson. In January, 1882, a schooner put in at a little coral island for shelter, discovered the tank and the skeletons, and lifted the veil of mystery in which the tragedy had been shrouded. Mrs. Watson had died in the tank with the baby in her arms and the revolver near at hand ; and Ah Sam, faithful even in death, lay under a bush close by, with his rifle by his side and the bandages still hanging loosely about his bones.

Mrs. Watson, her child and Ah Sam were buried at Cooktown on Sunday, January 29, 1882. It was a public funeral and all classes and colours gathered to pay homage to her spirit and (let us hope) the spirit of the coloured man who, if he had been a crusader of romance, could not have been more faithful or more gallant. The tank in which that fantastic voyage was made was placed in Brisbane Museum, and in 1886 a monument was erected at Cooktown to the memory of the woman whose life and death should be an inspiration to Australians yet unborn.

# CHAPTER III

## THE EMPTY NORTH

Thursday Island—A Conflict of Colours—The Northern Fringes—First Sight of Darwin—Hot but Healthy—Chinese in White Australia—The Awakening by Night—I See a Corroboree—King Billy Looks Back—A Romance of Industry—The Roaring Days—Dead Darwin—The Problem of the Territory.

WE were well inside the tropics and still steaming northward; and every day the sun shone fiercer out of a cloudless sky. Then, like a jade gem in a sapphire setting, came Thursday Island, with its palms and rioting creepers, its historic little church gratefully erected by the sole survivor of the *Quetta*, its motley collection of pearlers, bêche-de-mer fishers and longshoremen, and the tiny garrison which is Australia's pitiful outpost against the menace from the North.

Thursday Island is a world in miniature. As at Broome, the Chinese and Japanese have a strong hold on trade, more especially the pearling industry; and in the streets of the little port whites of all the nations jostle brown-skinned Polynesians, the darker aborigines of Torres Straits, blacks from the mainland, yellow men from Canton and Kobe and perhaps now and then a Hindu pedlar or a straight-backed Arab.

Racial feeling at times runs high, conflict is not uncommon and life has that red-blooded quality so dear to people in Bayswater and Brooklyn.

One damsel whose home is now on the island found nothing strange in having seen a boy's stomach torn open by a shark, or a Japanese run amok with a revolver, or a party of besieged Chinese hack with axes at the black men who surged in at the door and up through the floor with the ferocity of Bishop Hatto's rats. Neither did she find anything romantic in her previous home—a little island farther south, uninhabited save for her family and so isolated that she and her small brothers had to voyage twenty or thirty miles in a motor-boat to reach their nearest neighbours. An island home washed by the waters of the great Pacific held no lure for her. Her idea of romance, I gathered, was a home somewhere in Mayfair, with the shops of Bond Street near at hand and the great electric theatre signs always beckoning her to the enchanted land round about Piccadilly Circus.

* * * * *

## II. Australia's Little East

From Thursday Island we steamed west across the mouth of the Gulf of Carpentaria and skirted Australia's northern coast. A dull red glow one night showed where a bush fire, started heaven knows how, had been ravaging the dreary wastes of Arnheim Land—the region where de Rougemont, if I remember aright, staged some of his exploits and discovered, amidst other peculiar fauna, flying wombats. We passed Melville Island, noted chiefly for its herds of wild buffalo—descendants of stock landed by the Dutch ; picked our way cautiously through a maze of islands, reefs and shoals, and went to bed that night with the Captain's assurance that at daybreak we would be in Darwin.

It was not yet seven o'clock when I ran on deck next morning, but the sun was already shining hotly out of a burnished silver sky.

"Port Darwin," announced the captain, with a sweep of his hand; and, stepping eagerly to the rail, I gazed for the first time upon the place that the world associates with Vestey's, Bolsheviks and heat.

Like most Australians from the south, I had expected to find a huddle of tin shanties on a desolate sun-baked plain. Instead I saw a big blue lagoon stretching away in the sparkling morning sunshine to encircling green shores. Mangrove trees rose here and there from the water, palms showed clear against the distant skyline, and but for two or three roof-tops gleaming white amidst the green, the whole place looked much as it would have done if it had been stumbled on by Cook.

And the town itself, as I discovered a little later, is as surprising as the tropic beauty of the harbour. Following the leaf-fringed path that winds upward through the palms and mangoes of the hillside, you come upon low bungalows with wide verandahs, protected from the fierce sunlight by the dense foliage of the trees and the creepers that climb luxuriantly about the walls. And Government House, with its cool, spacious rooms, white gravel drive, and tennis court set amongst a riot of flowering trees, is the sort of home of which tired shop girls dream.

But there is another side to Darwin, and though it does not add to the beauty of the place, it certainly gives the little town a picturesqueness and interest that you find nowhere else in Australia except Broome and Thursday Island. That is the contrast of colours—white, brown, black and

yellow. In Cavanagh Street you see yellow tailors working at the open windows; shops of all kinds display quaint wares with Chinese inscriptions; and as you pass the chattering folk on the pavement, and watch an aged man in a hat the shape and size of an umbrella come trotting across the street with two buckets of vegetables suspended from the bamboo across his shoulders, you might almost fancy yourself in one of the less crowded and less smelly villages of the East.

The Chinese of Darwin seem to do most of the trade and even in bad times contrive to prosper amazingly. Mrs. Urquhart, wife of the Administrator, told me that the jewels and trousseau shown her by one Chinese girl must have cost £6,000 or £7,000. Quite obviously, too, they have plenty of money to spend on idols, thrones and other odds and ends for their big tin joss-house.

Accompanied by an elderly caretaker, I went through this curious building and tried to learn something of its ceremonial. He told me the names of the gorgeously arrayed and fiercely moustachioed gods whose effigies occupy the places of honour, and I managed to gather that "one year one time priests makem walkabout"—or, in other words, give the gods their annual outing to the accompaniment of much shouting, beating of drums and other well-known aids to devotion. Last year the procession was ruined by rain, so, like the coolies who beat their josses whenever things go wrong, the Darwin Chinese promptly deposed the chief god and installed another of whom better things are expected.

Some of the Chinese have their own private joss-houses.

"How often you pray there?" I asked one fifteen-year-old boy.

"One month two times," replied this product of a White Australia in which education is free and compulsory.

Though nearly all born at Darwin and legally as Australian as Mr. Bruce, the Chinese of the Territory mostly speak little English, keep up the connection with China and preserve their Chinese mode of life, even to the extent of huddling together in tin shanties that are neither picturesque nor sanitary.

In these conditions and in the absence of water-sewage, it is astonishing that typhoid and diphtheria are practically unknown.

"No germs can live in this air," one toothless old lady, a boarding-house keeper, emphatically assured me in the course of a half-hour's monologue. "I've been in England, Scotland and Wales, and I've been here twenty-seven years, and I say"—she paused and gazed at me suspiciously, but finding no signs of combativeness on my part, went on—"I say it's the healthiest place for children in the world. The only people that goes to pieces is them that knocks about with the blacks."

Certainly the Territory has produced some fine specimens of humanity—most of whom, by the way, look like Greeks or Italians. But it is generally admitted that women and children are all the better for periodic visits to the south.

* * * * *

### III. A Corroboree

By day Darwin drowses beneath the tropic sun. As night approaches the place awakes. The whites gather at the tennis court amongst the sheltering

green trees ; swarms of little Chinese children rush into the streets and play soccer with surprising keenness and skill ; and the blacks, after spending the day yarning in the shade of the trees, loaf more energetically at the street corners.

The aborigines around Darwin belong to seven or eight different tribes, but one thing they have in common—their amazing blackness. They have no shine, like the African negro ; no trace of the copper or brown of the South Sea Islander. The Territory black, almost alone amongst the peoples of the world, has a skin exactly like soot.

People tell you that the Australian aborigine is one of the lowest beings on earth, but having been fortunate enough to see a corroboree one night near Darwin I can swear that he has at least one virtue : he is a born actor. In a clearing lit by a huge fire, I found some hundreds of blacks assembled and the performers, numbering perhaps seventy or eighty, already running through their repertoire with the speed and certainty of a well-trained vaudeville troupe.

It was a remarkable performance. There came a monotonous droning from a bamboo pipe ; some one else started an unceasing tapping ; and the rest beat time by smacking their hands against their thighs and uttering something between a grunt and a gasp.

The ranks parted and a big savage-looking fellow, clad only in a loin cloth and with grisly white lines across his face and chest, leaped into the ring. He stopped, sniffed the air, walked a few paces and lay down.

" Him fellow buffalo," whispered old King Billy, whom I had engaged as interpreter, as he gazed

critically at the performance that was doubtless done so much better in his day.

The buffalo sniffed danger, rose to his feet, gazed with savage intensity into the night and began first to trot and then to gallop around the open space. The guttural "huhs" grew fiercer, the smack-smack-smacking came faster, and faster and faster galloped the buffalo until the performer was whirling dizzily in circles, now forwards and now backwards, his body held rigidly upright, his thighs arched, and his feet, still in perfect time, pounding the ground like sledge hammers and raising a cloud of dust with every stride.

The frenzied accompaniment reached its climax, there came a shout from a hundred throats, and the black figure outlined eerily against the flames stopped dead, gave a final "huh" and jumped back into the shadows amongst the laughing, excited crowd. His turn was over.

Another immediately took his place; a team—sharply prompted at times by King Billy—followed, and so the show went on while the replenished fire leaped higher and showers of sparks blew unnoticed in the wild black faces. Some danced better than others, but all were artists in graphic mimicry, and there was no need for King Billy to indicate a magpie, a snake, a crocodile and a number of crows gathered around a dying sheep.

But, best of all, I think, was the spear-fight. To me it was fascinating to watch the speed with which the fighters ducked and dodged the imaginary spears; to the older blacks it brought back memories of many a joyous fight and feast in the days not so long ago.

"Ever seen men killed with spears?" I asked King Billy.

" Thousands," said the old fellow with satisfaction, and possibly some slight inaccuracy.

With new interest I studied the lined, grey-bearded face and ragged figure surmounted by a torn and battered hat.

" How old you, Billy ? "

The King pondered.

" Plurry old," he announced at last. He certainly looked it. " Plenty young, too. You give me tchilling, eh boss ? "

It was the best shilling's worth I ever had.

* * * * *

### IV. Australia's Meat Drama

Talk to Darwin people nowadays and it is significant that always their thoughts turn towards the past. The veterans recall the early 'eighties when the railway was being built and the place was beginning to boom. " There was 5,000 Chows in the Territory in them days," one told me proudly. But even a Government job cannot last for ever, and, the railway finished, there settled over the Territory a calm not broken till the establishment of the meat works and the feverish burst of activity during the war.

Ten years ago Australia hoped to build up at Darwin a great meat-packing and freezing works that would challenge Swift's and Armour's. The Commonwealth, it was pointed out, was one of the leading cattle-raising countries in the world. Why couldn't she establish an industry that would make the British Empire independent of American meat ?

In 1912 the great experiment was tried. A powerful British company, with Sir William Vestey (now Lord Vestey) at its head, put down a

£2,000,000 plant at the isolated little town of Darwin, killing was commenced, and, with the outbreak of the war, the industry boomed.

It could hardly fail to. The British Government wanted meat, and wanted it too badly to be particular about the price ; and so Vestey's came in on one of the best contracts ever devised by a company lawyer—which is saying a good deal. This interesting document authorized them to turn out all the meat they could, not at any definite price, but at 10 per cent. above the cost of production. This meant, of course, that the higher the costs the greater was Vestey's profit ; and the suggestion has been made in some quarters—though for obvious reasons it would be difficult to prove—that the management deliberately stimulated labour to fresh demands, and obligingly conceded anything, in order to increase their rake-off.

This wholesale philanthropy was all very well while the entire output could be unloaded on the Imperial Government at any price. But when the war ended the contract was cancelled, the English market was glutted, and Vestey's found that they could supply all orders from their South American works at two-thirds the cost of operating at Darwin. Then came further labour troubles to deal the tottering industry its death-blow. Workmen, once accustomed to dictating their own terms, wanted to go on dictating. But the management, deciding that the charity which began at Home should henceforth be allowed to stay there, proved vastly less amiable than it had been, and the plant, having served its turn, was closed.

In 1925, I was told, it may resume work on a small scale, but in the meanwhile it lies idle with a

small gang of engineers to keep it from going to ruin in the moist tropic air.

"The meat works: why did they close, and when, if ever, will they reopen?" These are the stock topics in Darwin these days. Some people in the South and in London will tell you that the industry was ruined by Australian Bolsheviks. Mr. H. G. Nelson and his followers blame Vestey's. Others again—and Mr. Conacher, Vestey's manager, is amongst them—have blamed the Government rather than the Union. But the truth is that Vestey's is closed because no matter how docile the Australian worker proved, Darwin could not compete with the same firm's plant in South America.

This is not to say that labour was entirely blameless. On the contrary, there is no doubt that during the height of the boom Darwin housed some of the toughest and wildest spirits that Australia has known since the gold diggings. Half the races of the world were represented; the Greeks, Italians and Austrians were in the habit of going armed; and as one ex-employee put it to me, "You daresn't blink an eyelid in them days unless you wanted your —— head knocked off."

With high wages ruling money flowed like water, and all night long peaceable citizens could lie in bed and hear party after party go howling past in motor-cars on their way back from the hotels to the works. Clashes were frequent, and for a time, so I was assured by Mr. Urquhart, the Administrator, there was even something approaching a reign of terror. Government officials were forced to join the union, the houses of unsympathetic citizens were picketed, and the less courageous souls were reduced to calling on the Administrator at midnight. Things reached such a pass that it was

ABORIGINES, NORTHERN AUSTRALIA.

impossible to convict a unionist in the court, no matter how overwhelming the evidence. Even an Austrian ruffian who shot at a bluejacket in a picture show, and carelessly killed a Chinese, was triumphantly acquitted. And to cap it all came the comic opera revolution and the deportation of the principal officials.

Then came Mr. Urquhart, a man of resolute character and long experience in the Queensland police. He began by borrowing a Winchester repeater; carried it down the street through the staring malcontents, who had boasted that they were going to treat him as they had treated his predecessors; and sent a message that he was ready for all comers. There was no response. Mr. Urquhart followed up this dramatic gesture by dragging civil servants out of the Northern Australian Industrial Union, encouraging the formation of a rival union, and, most important of all, abolishing the jury system. Within three months order was restored and Darwin had seen the end of the nearest approach to a Soviet that Australia has known since the bloody affair of the Eureka Stockade.

* * * * *

Darwin is quiet enough now. Its crowded hour is over and the settlement drowses peacefully under the tropic sun. The closing of the meat works deprived the little town of its only great industry, and incidentally killed Australia's best hope of developing the Northern Territory—a land of 523,000 square miles with the population of the Regent Palace Hotel. The drovers no longer bring in their 2,000 beasts a week; the rough crowd who drew their £3 and £4 a day at Vestey's, and spent their money like kings, have long since drifted

south ; and over the whole place hangs an atmosphere of lethargy and decay. Darwin is dead.

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### V. What's Wrong with the Territory ?

What is wrong with the Northern Territory ? Why is it that this vast region remains, after fifty years' occupation, a drain upon the Commonwealth's finances, a land of unfulfilled promise ?

The Territory is supposed to be fine cattle country ; and yet few stations stock more than one beast to the square mile. During the war it supported the greatest freezing works in the British Empire ; but they are closed. The coastal belt produces none of the crops that you would expect to flourish in a tropical country : no cotton, no tobacco, no citrus fruits, only a handful of bananas and peanuts. The southern tableland is said to be well grassed, but it carries no sheep. The McDonnell Ranges are reported to be rich in minerals, but they produce no wealth. There is no dairying—Darwin boasts only one cow, and that happens to be dry—no mixed farming, and very little cultivation of even the most rudimentary kind.

Why ? What is this blight that cripples development and leaves one-sixth of the continent—and that in the most vulnerable region—to the care of some 2,250 whites, less than 1,000 Chinese, and possibly 15,000 aborigines ?

The first difficulty is this—that the Territory produces nothing, except meat, that cannot be grown more easily and more cheaply elsewhere. People say it will grow cotton. And, though last season's crop was a dead failure, it probably will. But why should a planter isolate himself in the Territory when he can go to Queensland, where

cotton has already proved a success and ginneries have already been built? They say it will grow tobacco. And having seen the plant springing up between the cracks in the cement of back yards, one can hardly doubt that it will. But tobacco will grow just as well in Queensland, where labour and marketing conditions are much more favourable. Again, the Territory will certainly grow peanuts and bananas, and it was beginning to produce oranges and lemons quite satisfactorily when, owing to a pest, the citrus trees all had to be destroyed. But even these things the rest of Australia grows better.

One should not generalize too much about a country of 523,000 square miles, but certain facts are indisputable. For the most part the soil of the Territory is not as fertile as that of the southern States; the grass that springs up during the wet season from November to March, and then dies away, is so rank that in places it reaches a height of over 30 feet and has been known completely to block the view from the train; the rainfall is irregular, varying from 60 inches on the coast to 10 in the interior; and irrigation, owing to the scarcity of surface water, would be difficult and extremely costly. Even in Darwin the water supply is uncertain, depending upon a few springs and soakage wells.

These facts do not prove that the Territory cannot be settled. But they do seem to indicate that if the whole thing is left to the ordinary process of natural selection, unaided by special Governmental measures, its development will come only when the density of population in the rest of Australia has reached something like saturation point.

The second great difficulty is the lack of quick and cheap means of communication with the South. Some idea of the hardships suffered at present may be gathered from the experience of one unlucky settler who imported 2½ tons of foodstuffs and wire-netting. The charges levied by the shipping company, the railway and the carrier amounted to £66 10*s*.! After that it is not quite so staggering to learn that Dr. Gilruth, the first Administrator, having acquired a solitary cow, found that the luxury was costing him £300 a year for feed.

Another illustration of the pioneer's difficulties was given me by the present Administrator. Recently, he said, a settler wanted a car to take him home from the railhead to the Victoria River Downs—a distance of 220 miles. The lowest tender was £98.

This sort of thing is the Territory's greatest handicap. Much has been promised; but the North-South railway is still in the air, and the Territory's roads are still paved only with good intentions.

The third difficulty is the climate. In the coastal belt there are incessant downpours from November to March, accompanied by a steamy, enervating heat; then comes eight months' unbroken drought. In the southern tablelands the nights are cool and the climate quite pleasant, but water is so rare that any closer settlement is at present out of the question.

Lest some people should picture a parched inferno, it may be as well to emphasize that all this criticism is purely relative. The climate is not worse than that of most tropical countries. Even the humid North is not unhealthy. Malaria is very

rare, typhoid and diphtheria are unknown, and the only cases of plague that Darwin has known were landed from a boat. Every one I spoke to was emphatic about the healthiness of the place, and the appearance of whites born and bred in the Territory is quite sufficient to show that it is, or could be, a white man's country. But that does not necessarily mean an Anglo-Saxon country. The best chance of developing the empty North without coloured labour probably lies in the introduction of carefully-selected immigrants from the Mediterranean countries, where the climate is not so very dissimilar.

Summed up, the views of leading Darwin people amount to this—that the only hope of achieving anything lies in a courageous and carefully co-ordinated scheme—

(*a*) To test exhaustively the Territory's capacity to grow cotton, tobacco, bananas, pineapples, nuts, citrus fruits, and other tropical products ;

(*b*) To provide a great artesian water system that will make possible intense cultivation in the North and sheep-breeding by small settlers on the central and southern tablelands ;

(*c*) To establish regular and cheap communications with the markets of the South ;

(*d*) To make a thorough survey of the McDonnell Ranges, where rich deposits are reported ;

(*e*) To undo, if it is not too late, the effects of the new bill that so carefully locks up the finest lands in the Territory, in the interests of the big cattle men, for the best part of this century ; and

(*f*) If Anglo-Saxons cannot be obtained in sufficient numbers, to settle an experimental colony of Italians or Greeks—preferably Italians.

If the Federal Ministry had the courage to evolve

some such scheme as this, and back it up, if necessary, with £10,000,000, it would cost Australia no more in the long run than the present futile process of dribbling away money. And what a reward Australia would reap if the scheme succeeded—a great tropical State of planters and fruit-growers and farmers where now are vast wastes given up to the dingo and the black.

## CHAPTER IV

### ISLES OF ROMANCE

Through Magic Seas—The Glory of Lombok and Bali—A Scientific Debate—Sourabaya—I solve a Mystery—Wonderful Borobudor and Some Side-Shows—A Grisly Relic—A Land of Vivid Contrasts—Poor Little Brown Men and Chinese Millionaires.

THE last low headlands of Australia dimmed and sank and disappeared, and with our course set to the north-westward, flying fish playing about the boat and now and then a bright-hued sea snake drifting by, we ploughed steadily through the oily waters of the Arafura Sea towards the archipelago that the world once knew as the Spice Islands.

The wooded slopes of Samba and Sandalwood Island rose on our starboard bow and disappeared into the dull haze astern ; far to the east one day I saw the mountains of Timur, famous the world over for its ponies ; and then, as we neared Java, came the miracle of Lombok.

We had been playing deck cricket, I remember, and I was trying to account for an indifferent display by pointing out that in this wretched imitation of a great game every shot is useless except the straight drive. Before us, as we leaned across the rail, a bank of cloud rose 6,000 or 7,000 feet from the water. But what was that above it ? A peculiar cloud formation, or a trick of the tropic air ? No, Glory to God ! it was real—a peak of silver

soaring straight up two miles from the sea and perhaps a mile above the clouds.

I can still recall the quickening of my pulse as I gazed upon that masterpiece of God ; and it really was very beautiful. But a few hours later we were in the Straits of Bali, and Lombok was forgotten. Another peak, its blue mass vaguely outlined against the hazy sky, loomed 10,000 feet above us. Great ravines, so deep that their densely-wooded depths were lost in a dim and gloomy twilight, gashed the mountain side ; razor-back ridges, gaunt and forbidding, stood out like the ribs of a skeleton ; and, below, serried brown slopes showed where lava floods had rolled down towards the sea.

Was it inhabited ? Most of us were not quite sure. Some borrowed glasses, others feverishly adjusted cameras, and all sought eagerly for a sign of life. One school pointed to green patches and terraces as indisputable evidence of cultivation, and were of the opinion that certain brown dots scattered here and there were houses. The sceptics said the green patches were natural oases and dismissed the dots contemptuously as rocks.

It is pleasant to be able to record that in the end the scoffers were confounded. Some methodical soul produced a guide-book and we learned, with a new shame at our ignorance, that Bali is not only inhabited but, in a quiet way, famous. Archæologists, it seemed, still visit it for its Buddhist temples, and it is remarkable for the fact that, apart from a remnant a hundred or so strong in a little mountain village in South-east Java, it is the last stronghold of Buddhism in the East Indies.

We were still digesting this information in silence when some one made a sensational discovery.

"A sail!" he cried, following the best traditions, as he glued his eyes to his binoculars.

"Two sails!" he added triumphantly a moment later.

"Three sails!" bellowed his neighbour, and—so delicate a thing is Romance—we had dropped to the level of an auction.

Still, there were the boats—little native sampans with dirty grey leg-of-mutton sails, looking much as sampans did, I suppose, in the days when Portuguese adventurers and stout-hearted Dutchmen first sailed these seas in search of gold and silks and fragrant spices. And then, as we swung in towards the shore, other marvels became apparent: two or three brown huts, very tiny, on the hill-side; clusters of palms; and a herd of cows being driven slowly along the shore.

One young man even swore he could see girls bathing in gaily-coloured costumes; but this, we all agreed, was an optical illusion not infrequently produced by youth and a romantic temperament.

"Besides," added our junior sceptic, with the air of one who knew, "Malay girls don't wear bathing costumes."

And again there was a thoughtful pause.

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## II. Sourabaya

We were through the straits, with the low green shores of Java on our left; and in due course we entered the yellow water that proclaimed, so the captain said, our approach to Sourabaya. A few housetops, suggesting a straggling village rather than a large and prosperous town, came into view around a headland; and an hour or so later we were in the harbour, with tugs puffing fussily to

and fro, and brown men pulling frantically at oars and steering first this way and then that so aimlessly that it was hard to believe they had either starting point or destination.

Then came the landing ; the struggle to ward off shrill-voiced hotel couriers, baggage touts and drivers of hire cars ; the haggling that precedes the smallest transaction in the East ; and ultimately a mad dash from the wharves to the Oranje Hotel—a distance of four or five miles—behind one of the brown lunatics to whom Java entrusts its cars.

As a chauffeur the Javanese has several peculiarities. For one thing he always has an assistant who sits beside him and makes signals, opens gates (if any) and spits on those who do not get out of the way. Some pairs even carry co-operation as far as gear-changing, one shifting the lever while the other's bare foot throws out the clutch.

But these are mere mannerisms. His outstanding characteristic is his passion for speed. Twenty times, as we roared through the traffic at over 30 miles an hour, we missed other vehicles by inches ; and half a dozen times I thought we were as good as dead. But somehow we escaped, and soon (as is the way with mankind) we were taking miracles for granted and concentrating on the things about us.

Just what I had expected I do not know ; but to me, as to my wide-eyed companions, this was a place of wonder. Few of us had travelled outside the Commonwealth before, for you must know that to the Australian a trip abroad is not an adventure to be undertaken lightly. The Londoner may breakfast at home and dine next day in Amsterdam, Berlin, Madrid, Vienna or even Rome ; or

he may, if his taste runs that way, become a Saturday-to-Monday cosmopolitan and do the Folies Bergères, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the Luxembourg and the return trip to Brixton, and incidentally almost forget his English, all in the space of forty-eight hours.

The Australian is not so fortunate. Berlin is not as far from London as Brisbane is from Sydney; the Perth man, to reach the nearest of the other State capitals, must face a journey that would take a Londoner to Moscow or Constantinople; and the Australian or New Zealander who wants to go abroad is six weeks away from England, and three weeks from America, India or South Africa. Of the considerable and well-settled countries of the world Java is by far the nearest—a mere five days from Darwin, which is not much as we reckon distances in Australasia. But then, as I have said, Darwin itself is ten days' steam from Sydney, twelve from Melbourne and a fortnight from Adelaide or Hobart. Is it any wonder that the average Australian knows as much about Java as the Englishman knows of Anatolia or Venezuela? The old geographers who labelled four-fifths of the globe *Terra Incognita*, and added, in a feeble attempt at the informative, "*Here are Dragons*," could not have been much vaguer about Atlantis or Cathay than most of our ship's company were about the East Indies. Therein we were rather fortunate, I think, for to the traveller, if to no one else, ignorance has its compensations. Who has ever found America quite as perfect as did Columbus, or doubled the Cape with the exaltation of Vasco da Gama, or explored Peru with the wonder and triumph that were Pizarro's?

So I have thought since, but just then we were

all absorbed in exclamatory observation, at one moment entranced by something peculiar to the East, at another coming with delight upon a proof of the universality of things—more especially the films. The very first poster I saw contained the announcement :

VANAF ZATERDAG 14 JUNI,
HAROLD LLOYD
IN ZIJN NIEUWSTE LACHSUCCES
GROOTMOEDER'S JONGEN ;

and I was soon to find many another quaint result of the impact of East and West. In a picturesque inland town, all dirt and squalid beauty, you are confronted by the familiar features of Jackie Coogan ; on a shabby street stall I noticed Galsworthy's *To Let*, such signs of civilization as *Tarzan van de Apen* and (of course) *Als de Winter Komt* ; and when I asked at a railway bookstall for a Java Year-Book an intelligent and resourceful youth offered me in quick succession Berta Ruck's *Three of Hearts*, the *Grandiose* fashion review, and, as a last shot, *Filmland*, described (and for all I know with justice) as *Maanblad voor Filmnieuws in Ned. Indie.*

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### III. Behind the Wall

Exactly how long I was in Sourabaya I forget ; but I know that every minute of my lingering was a delight. The European quarter, with its endless avenues of palms and myriads of Chinese lanterns, is by night a paradise which I'll swear Haroun's Bagdad never equalled. The dark streets of the native quarter, with their swarms of coffee-coloured children and shuffling Chinese, are just what such

streets should be, with adventure awaiting you around every corner. And there is a rare delight, if you are built that way, in exploring its queer backwaters.

One bazaar in particular lingers in my memory —the sort of place that would move Kipling to glittering prose and every town-planner to a frenzy of destruction. Little Javanese squatted beside unsavoury-looking heaps of vegetables; a withered hag, repulsive even in the dim light of the smoking torches, thrust in my face a handful of little cream flowers with a heavy, clinging scent; and a band of dusky girls, quite pleasant looking in their way, burst into an orgy of giggling and whispering as I stopped for a second to marvel at the size and weight of the huge metal bands that each wore around her ankles. Then, above the subdued hum of the bazaar, came the monotonous pom-pom-pom of a drum and the sound of strange music.

Curiosity overcoming me, I threaded my way through this place of darkness and evil smells, and in a few seconds was so near the source of the music that I could feel the vibrations of the booming drum. But still I could see nothing. Ahead was a high bamboo wall with not a single door or window to break its blankness, not a clue to what lay on the other side.

An opium den? A harem? Some strange Eastern cabaret?

Guessing wildly, and more curious than ever, I stumbled along the wall, turned a corner and suddenly emerged from the darkness into a narrow lane. There I saw a lantern, a flaming poster, a little hole in the wall where people were paying money, and a door at which a smiling gentleman

with a white suit and a coffee-coloured face was taking the tickets.

The mystery was solved. It was a native picture show.

I put down a guelder (1*s.* 8*d.*), was given a ticket and 1*s.* 2*d.* change, and, in return for this outlay, was personally conducted by the manager to a sort of dais ordinarily reserved, I should think, for royalty. Here I occupied a chair in solitary state and watched the brown and yellow people rushing the benches in front or squatting on their haunches around the little space where the musicians sat upon the bare earth floor. The Chinese came in sedately and sat silently waiting for the show to begin. The Javanese, their white teeth gleaming in happy smiles, chattered and laughed until they almost drowned the music.

Not that it mattered. The drum boomed on, a primitive string instrument wailed up and down a range of four notes, and now and then a fellow with a triangle tapped it wearily and produced an irrelevant tinkle. The performance was not impressive.

There came an extra bang on the drum, a turning of heads towards the little stage to the left of the screen, and I sat up with fresh hope. Perhaps some Eastern houri—the black-eyed, undulating sort that the films have made tolerably familiar—was now going to dance.

A dirty curtain was pulled aside and two figures slowly emerged. But they were not houris. They were men, and they seemed tired and singularly dispirited. Each carried a long scarf, and, waving it languidly, walked slowly about the stage with a swaying movement not unlike that of a cinema 'vamp" slowed down to about one-third normal.

Sometimes they would stop and posture ; and now and then one would approach the other, lay hands on his shoulder and then back timidly away. And so they went on all the evening, wandering to and fro to the tuneless music with as little apparent plan or purpose as two bits of flotsam drifting on the placid surface of a pool. . . .

Watching these Javanese professionals, I could not help contrasting their spiritless performance with the amazing skill and dash of the wild black men whom I had seen dancing, just for the fun of it, one glorious night beneath a Darwin moon.

The lights went out, an alarming hissing and spluttering began behind me, and simultaneously streaks of light played like forked lightning about the frayed and grimy screen. After a minute or so they settled down a little and resolved themselves into the likeness of a man. Another man appeared —was that a uniform he was wearing ?—and then, as the operator began to strike form, I could distinguish some trees and ultimately a whole park.

Curious to learn what sort of picture such a crowd would like, I stayed on and in time had the answer. The first feature was a very old and battered Keystone Comedy. The second proved to be an instalment of an Arsène Lupin serial, " The Mystery of the Double Cross." Thus does Hollywood bring home to the poor illiterate heathen of the East the beauty and the glory of Western civilization.

Both, in the language of the box office, " went big." The crowd understood not one word of the witticisms of the comic, wherein they were more fortunate than they knew ; but when one fat policeman tried to catch two hoboes simultaneously, and fell heavily on his stomach, the excel-

lence and subtlety of the jest were apparent to all. And they seemed to like the serial even better. They hissed the villain on sight, gasped and shouted in the crises, thoroughly relished the killing, and altogether behaved just as people behave at a warranted genuine thriller.

Watching the emotions flitting across the brown faces, yellow faces and mezzotints, I fathomed at last the mentality for which the average American studio is producing. The coloured man has no use for psychological studies and the play of complex motives. What he likes is something that explains itself—fat men falling heavily, bathing girls mislaying their clothes, and Western American dramas with plenty of galloping and (for preference) a fresh corpse in every reel. He doesn't understand Western politics or finance or even love-making; but a man who has been shot or kicked in the stomach is dead or discomfited the world over. The play of manners and the play of ideas have necessarily a limited appeal; slapstick and melodrama are universal.

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### IV. Land of Dirt and Beauty

There were those who found Java mildly interesting—" the East is so—er—Eastern, you know "—and there were those who hated it. I had the pleasure of travelling with two young men who detested the " dirty niggers " (meaning the Javanese), never ceased to sigh for the open spaces of Australia and performed the incredible and shameful feat of sleeping through the journey from Sourabaya to Djockjakarta.

For me those days in Java were full of the most exquisite delight. Within the next few months I

A CELEBRATED JAVANESE ACTOR AT DJOKJAKARTA.

A JAVANESE BATIK WORKER.

was to pass on to many a strange land from Singapore to Siberia and beyond, but none that stirred me in quite the same way. Java, I think, though I know most people will disagree with me, is for the most part far more beautiful than Japan; and if its squalor is appalling it is also picturesque, which is more than can be said of the mud villages which disfigure the bare plains of China.

Thoroughly to appreciate Java, I fancy, you should come, as I did, from a land of open spaces. Then you should be in the right frame of mind to marvel at the fertility of the place, its amazing richness, its swarming millions, its bursting, teeming life.

You stare at the fields of rice and sugar stretching away to the dim blue hills, and marvel at the appetite of the world and the intensity of culture that makes it possible for an island of only 51,000 square miles—one-sixtieth the size of Australia—to support a population of 40,000,000 almost entirely on the fruits of its soil.

You wonder why there should be so many green clumps of palms and bamboos in fields where every other available inch seems to be under crop; and you discover, with a little thrill of surprise, that what you took to be waste land is really a village—so well hidden by the trees that even from a few yards away you catch only a fleeting glimpse of a thatched roof, a bamboo wall, and perhaps a naked child playing in the shade. You see cultivation so intense that even the steepest hillside is terraced and under crop—each terrace irrigated by the overflow from the terrace above and, though it be only the size of a room, contributing its tiny quota of rice to the country's wealth. And if the pictur-

esque appeals to you, then Java offers everything from placid, water-covered plains, very beautiful when the palms are silhouetted against the reds and golds of the evening sky, to the rugged volcanic peaks of Tosari, and deep mysterious ravines.

It may be, of course, that you are built like Dr. Johnson, who, as every one knows, detested the country and thought Fleet Street " the finest walk in Europe." Well, in Java you can study mankind in every setting, from the lovely white homes of Sourabaya, Samarang and Batavia to little bamboo hovels in which a white man would not house a dog. I shall never forget a drive one glorious night through the European quarter of Sourabaya : the moon shining serenely through the avenues of palms, the bats circling weirdly overhead, and the Chinese lanterns of a thousand embowered bungalows completing the illusion of an Arabian Nights fairyland.

The other side of the picture I found in the typical native quarter of Djockjakarta : tumble-down shacks leaning crazily askew ; bare earth floors ; food set out all day in the sun for the flies and dust to fall in ; swarms of men, women and children eating and sleeping in the filth of a single room ; and, pervading everything, a stench at which the tender-stomached traveller shudders and hurries on.

For Java, in everything except the unvarying moist heat of the lowlands, is a land of vivid contrasts—social, economic and geographical. The whites' houses and hotels are spotless, for no tropic heat can subdue the passion for cleanliness which seems to be implanted in every Dutchman. The filth of the native villages is indescribable. In

the open fields of the north-east a rabbit could not shelter. In the jungles of the south-west you may come across a tiger or a rhinoceros—though they are becoming rare these days—and monkeys gibber at you from the branches. You see Javanese herding in villages so small that one of them could be put in an up-to-date department store ; and at the other end of the scale are yellow merchants riding in Rolls-Royces.

" The Javanese," a friend told me as we crossed the street, " work sixteen hours a day for 6*d*. a day." And even as he spoke a screaming siren warned us to jump or be run down by a limousine in which reclined a fat and complacent Chinese millionaire. Some of the Chinese—everywhere the great traders of the East—are amazingly wealthy. Oei Tiang Ham, the crafty old sugar magnate and opium smuggler, has just died and left a fortune variously estimated at from £4,000,000 to £25,000,000.

It is a curious and pathetic fact that the only people who cannot make money in Java are the Javanese themselves. The Dutch, the Chinese, the American automobile and oil people, and the Arabs who lend money at rates ranging from a modest 1,000 per cent upwards, all contrive to thrive and in some cases to grow rich. But partly because of economic and social conditions, and partly because of their own weakness of fibre, there is only a lifetime of poverty and toil ahead of the gentle little brown folk to whom the country belongs.

Is it any wonder that the Javanese, though well governed by the Dutch, dream vaguely of regaining their independence ? Laid on the ground in Batavia is an ancient Portuguese cannon. This

is supposed to be the male cannon. In Bantam there is a female cannon. And the natives who visit each to pray and offer flowers believe that when the two come together of their own agency, on that day will the foreigners' yoke be cast off and Java be free.

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### V. Dreams Amid the Ruins

If ever you go to Java—and you could scarcely do better—you will find that there is one historic relic that every one conspires to thrust on you and you cannot possibly avoid. That, of course, is the famous Buddhist temple of Borobudor.

Over a thousand years ago, so the legend runs, a certain good and wise prince fell in love with a neighbouring princess, and, man-like, thought to impress her by building an enormous temple. But, alas ! for his hopes of winning her with bricks and mortar. The lady, having succeeded to a principality herself by this time, gazed at the great pile without either enthusiasm or any sudden inrush of affection.

" And so," the story ends, " the prince bowed his head in silence, for he knew that she was not worthy."

Which, seeing that no normal damsel wants to marry a temple, however ornate, seems just a little hard on this very feminine princess. Besides, the prince's wisdom was obviously overrated ; goodness has never been a certain passport to a lady's heart ; and, for all we know, he may have been bald-headed and bow-legged.

Very wonderful, of course, is this vast monument to unrequited love. But I am not sure that I do not prefer some of Java's sideshows. Who, for

instance, could stand before a certain white wall in the old quarter of Batavia and gaze unmoved at the grim grey head impaled upon the top?

In 1722, it seems, one Pieter Erberfeld planned to murder all the Dutch while they slept off the effects of some drunken festival, and establish himself as king. But a native girl whom he had beaten betrayed the plot, and the Dutch took prompt and effective measures to lessen Pieter's capacity for evil. To be precise, they had him torn to pieces by four horses and stuck his head on a wall for all to see. And there it is to-day, with an inscription setting forth that it is not to be damaged, or hidden by trees, or built over, but is to stand there as a warning to traitors until the world ends.

Very interesting, too, in quite a different way, is the ruined Water Palace of Djockjakarta. In that quaint city there is a modern palace, surrounded by a huge enclosure said to contain 25,000 people, "mostly relatives of the present Sultan." Even allowing for the habits of the East, I should say that either the figure is a little exaggerated or the degree of relationship rather remote.

But it was the Water Palace that I wished to see; and so in due course, having driven a mile or so through the narrow, dirty streets of the native quarter, where the ramshackle bamboo houses leave barely room enough for a vehicle to pass, I was set down at a gap in a high wall and met by a smiling youth whose mastery of English was confined mainly to the useful phrases "me guide" and "one guelder please."

Down steps we went, and along an underground passage, and up a winding stone stairway, crumbling and moss-grown ; and then I found myself in the midst of the ruins of the once famous Water Palace—so called because the surrounding grounds and lower passages could all be flooded at the ruler's whim.

The lofty, roofless chamber in which we stood was, it seemed, the hall where the Sultan dined. Adjoining it were the rooms where the princesses—he had forty—sang and danced for their master's pleasure ; and high above was the bamboo loft, long since perished, which served as a bedroom for the favourite—or, in the idiom of the East, the "number one princess."

Climbing crazy stone staircases, and over great heaps of fallen masonry, almost covered with bamboos and tapioca trees and flowering creepers, I saw the place where they drowned undesirables, the private bathing fountains of the Sultan and the number one princess, and the larger pool provided for the other thirty-nine. Here the guide pointed to a stone building overhanging the scum-covered water, and, showing his white teeth in a broad grin, graphically shaded his eyes to indicate that from this retreat the Sultan used to peep through at the bathing girls.

The guide went on muttering the unintelligible information that was to earn him his usual fee, and as much more as he could extort. Parties of native youngsters stared at me with black and wondering eyes. But I scarcely saw or heard. I was dreaming of the dramas of passion and jealousy and hate on which these same crumbling walls had looked down ; and it seemed to me that the spirits of dusky princes and princesses once

more walked, and played out the comedy of life, in these chambers that to-day echo eerily to the droning of guides and the steps of Chicago meat-packers.

# CHAPTER V

## SINGAPORE

Memories—The Coast of Sumatra—The Pirates' Lair—Singapore—The Naval Base—Rusting Machinery—Commercial and Strategic Importance of the Island—My First Rickshaw Ride—Disillusionment.

THE housetops of old Batavia were fading into the distance and a flood of memories and impressions, queerly jumbled, surged through my mind . . . little brown folk, their heads no higher than the sugar cane, streaming across the fields at dawn . . . a deep ravine with a wilderness of unfamiliar trees clinging to its walls and a little stream eddying far below . . . men and women washing clothes in the yellow and filthy canal at Batavia, and then casually casting off their clothes for a swim . . . young duck-herds shooing their flustered flocks from the road that leads from Djockjakarta to Borobudor . . . watery plains, with rice just sprouting above the surface, and the black shadows of the palms lengthening as the sun went down in a glory of red and yellow and gold . . . and the historic quarter of Batavia, with its wharves and watch-house and other relics of the stirring days when Holland was disputing Portugal's supremacy in the East.

I felt a pang of regret, too, for Java's truly wonderful hotels, with their lawns and palms, smiling brown "boys" and unspeakable rijstafel —a mess founded on a mountain of rice and built

up of anything from twenty to fifty-two different dishes. To be awakened in the cool of a tropic morning, and sit on the balcony in your pyjamas while a soft-footed Javanese serves coffee and fresh fruit, and strange birds twitter all about you, is something to delight in and never quite forget.

All this lay behind; but regrets were soon stifled by new pleasures. We crossed the Straits, and next day began to skirt the east coast of Sumatra—a vast solitude of fever-haunted swamps stretching away in a dead straight line as far as the eye could see. Then came the Straits of Malacca and the Rhio Archipelago, famous until the middle of last century for its pirates—the captain pointed out the island with the secret harbour that was their lair; and next day we found ourselves amongst the little islands around Singapore.

People visit Singapore for many different reasons and leave it with as many different impressions. Good Kipling folk remember that they have been told to feed at Raffles'. Confirmed romantics find, in its brown boys diving for coppers, its rickshaws and palms, its narrow, unsavoury streets and warm, sensuous nights, outward and visible signs of the inner magic of the East. And even the soberest observer must be stirred a little by the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the place, with its British officials, clamorous Hindu and Armenian shop-keepers, and swarms of Malays and Chinese coolies.

Certainly the contrasts are startling enough. It is but a step from the handsome buildings near the water front to the sordid hovels of the native quarter; only a minute or two in a rickshaw and you are transported from the lounges

and ball rooms of Raffles' or the Europe Hotel to the opium dens and filthy brothels of China Street or Sago Street where coloured women sell themselves nightly for coppers and feuds are often ended with a revolver or the knife

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## II. Australia's Bulwark

It was partly to see and feel all these things that I went to Singapore ; partly to find out what progress had been made with the naval base in which Australia and New Zealand are so keenly interested.

I found that though a great deal of money had been spent there was very little to show for it. All work had ceased, most of the staff had been recalled, and the plant, brought out at heavy expense, lay rusting in the steamy air. Except for a few excavations and concrete foundations, and advertisements in the local papers offering for sale a vast assortment of locomotives, dredges, lathes, winches and miscellaneous machinery, the great scheme had disappeared and left no trace. Just how much the project had cost only a few leading officials knew, and they preserve strict secrecy ; and there were very few who had any but the vaguest idea as to where the docks, forts and oil tanks were to be.

To understand the scheme it is first necessary to know something about the geography of the place and its resources and strategic position. About 27 miles long by 14 broad, Singapore is a small island separated from the mainland of the Malay Peninsula by a narrow channel called the Old Strait, which has just been bridged by a causeway. The population, nearly all concen-

trated in the town on the south-east side of the island, is about 450,000, 2 per cent. of whom are Europeans and the rest coloured peoples, mostly Chinese and Malays.

Agriculturally and industrially the island is far too small to be of much consequence, but two factors combined have given it almost unique importance. It is the chief export centre for the great mines and plantations from which the Malay States supply more than half the world's tin and rubber; and it occupies one of the finest trade sites on the face of the globe. Commanding the narrow strait between the Indian Ocean and the China Sea, it has developed into the great half-way house between East and West, and one of the largest ports in the world. The flag of every maritime nation floats from the forest of masts in the harbour, and on an average thirty or forty vessels pass through every day.

Strategically Singapore is equally valuable. It not only commands the route between East and West, but would enable a fleet based there to intercept any force moving from Japan to Australia, or, failing that, to cut its lines of communication.

Look at the island more in detail and you find that on the south and south-east is the town; about three miles westward lie Keppel Harbour, the King's Dock and the wharves; and on the little island of Blakang Mati are the four fairly strong forts relied upon to protect the coal, the shipping and the greatest tin smelting works in the world. This was the old conception of defence, and when the coming of oil ships forced the authorities to instal oil tanks the same general plan was followed. The Normanton rifle range,

in a hollow amongst the hills, was acquired, and a number of tanks were set down with the guns of Blakang Mati to protect them against bombardment from the sea.

But with the decision to build a great Pacific naval base an entirely new plan of defence was adopted. The defensive possibilities of the Old Strait—so called because it was always used until Admiral Keppel found the south passage—were recognized by the British experts, and Seletar was selected as the most suitable site. Its strategic advantages are obvious Now that the causeway has been completed from Singapore to Johore Bharu, on the mainland, Seletar cannot be attacked from the west ; and the forts that will presumably be built on the headland, and the islands at the eastern end of the passage, will make it almost impregnable against attack from the east.

The new site has one weakness—it will be well within reach of big guns mounted on the mainland across the strait. Johore, though " protected " by Britain, is an independent State ruled by a despotic sultan renowned chiefly for the number of his wives and cars, the latter including a Rolls-Royce ; and, though he is friendly enough now, it is barely possible that he would be unable or unwilling to protect Singapore against aggression from the north, in the unlikely event of a hostile force being able to cross the swamps and dense jungle of Johore. Hence the recent Japanese scare. Rumours persistently went round Singapore to the effect that Japanese had acquired rubber plantations on the hills commanding the strait and were putting down concrete floors capable of being used as emplacements for artil-

lery. I learned on good authority that British intelligence officers quietly investigated and found that, though the Japanese are there all right, they have as yet built nothing very alarming. Whether the land has really been acquired as an ordinary investment, or as part of a notoriously long-sighted Government's preparations for future contingencies, is a matter on which one can only speculate. But there are some people in Singapore who don't much like the coincidence.

In Singapore, as in Britain and Australasia, there are two schools of thought about the base. One professes to believe that the Japanese menace is a bogy invented by British militarists and armament firms. The other is convinced that Japan, like every other nation in history which wanted something that it could not have, is merely biding her time. This latter section regarded the abandonment of the base as a colossal blunder that exposed Britain's whole position in the Pacific, and more especially Australia, New Zealand and the great port of Singapore itself, to the most deadly peril.

Any frank discussion of the question in Singapore is out of the question. The island is a Crown Colony without an elective Parliament and without parties ; the Governor and the Colonial Secretary, being appointed by the Imperial Government, can hardly criticize its decisions ; and some of the leading commercial men are officially nominated members of the Legislative Council and bound to the same strict secrecy. But I talked to several men who are well in touch with the position in the East, and found that most of them shared Australia's view that a great base at Singapore, and the shifting of a large section of the British fleet

from home waters to the Pacific, will soon be vital to our safety.

They were curiously nonchalant about it, however, perhaps because they have learned to leave everything that matters to Downing Street and Whitehall, possibly because fatalism is in the very air of the East.

"Oh, yes, we know it will come some day," one told me. "We'll wake some morning and find a foreign fleet outside. But they know all about it at Home, and probably there will be a British fleet quite handy. Besides," he added thoughtfully, "we'll have the base soon."

His conviction, I found, was shared by others in touch with the authorities. Official Singapore was convinced—and subsequent events have justified the conviction—that Japan could scarcely make a full recovery from the earthquake before Mr. Macdonald fell; and this was the real reason for the optimism of a great Imperial outpost that cannot afford, any more than Australasia can, to gamble with national life and death.

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### III. A Rickshaw Ride

But, as I look back, it is not the naval base that comes uppermost in my memory. It is the trifles of life that often bite deepest, and so, when I think of Singapore, I think of my first rickshaw ride.

I had expected a tall, muscular young man with the frame of an athlete and the limbs of a runner, Instead I saw between the shafts a figure that seemed to embody all that is tragic in the East. He was about five feet in height and weighed, I should think, seven stone; his back was bent with

long years of animal toil in burning sun and tropic rain ; his chest caved in so alarmingly that one wondered where his lungs were and how they could possibly function ; his head was bowed as if with the sorrows of ages ; and from his yellow, parchment-like face, seamed with countless lines and hollowed with a lifetime of semi-starvation, his dull sunken eyes peered out with the hopeless resignation that you see in the face of an overworked horse. Judging by his face and bald head, he was very, very old.

Actually, according to an experienced friend who studied him with the indifference of a man appraising a steer, he was probably about forty.

My first impulse was to send away this worn-out human hack and engage one of the younger boys hovering near. But he loudly protested, and so, very reluctantly, I stepped into the little rubber-shod vehicle and set out through a maze of tortuous streets.

At first he trotted along at a fair pace, though without any of the bounding resiliency in his stride that gives the young rickshaw boy a high-stepping action not unlike that of a white runner exercising on a track ; but after a few minutes he began to labour. I tried to slow him down to a walk, but either misunderstanding my signs, or regarding them as a reflection on his professional skill, he mechanically trotted on.

There came a splash on my hand and within ten seconds we were in the midst of one of the downpours for which Singapore is famous. The boy—they are all "boys," regardless of age—stopped, hoisted the hood, and plodded on again while the rain drenched his thin blue cotton jacket, poured in streams from the bottom of his trousers

and splashed about his feet. I waved him towards a verandah or a lane, but he thought I had mistaken my destination, shook his head and, leaning farther forward in the shafts, ran on like an automaton through the storm.

Just as suddenly as it had come, the rain stopped. The sun again shone fiercely, and by the time we had reached the end of the journey—it did not take more than seven or eight minutes altogether—the streets and the runner's clothes were dry. Is it any wonder that consumption and pneumonia take their toll?

And then happened one of the things that make permanent residents smile when you sympathize with these little figures condemned to spend their lives drawing fat Bengalis and joy-riding Cook's tourists. The correct fare, I knew, was 20 cents (5*d*.) for anything between half a mile and a mile. But because of the rain, and because he looked so old and frail, I gave the boy a dollar, or 2*s*. 4*d*. Whereupon, having received five times his legal fare, he instantly started shrill protests intended to indicate that I was robbing him of his life blood.

Recollecting the advice of friends, I walked away, but, as I feared, the moaning and gesticulating nuisance followed me half-way up the steps of the hotel. Weakly I gave him another 20 cents, and even then, as I walked away with burning ears, I could still hear him proclaiming my incredible meanness to the guests assembled in the open lounge.

This, I learned, is what always happens when you overpay them. If you give a boy his legal 10 or 20 cents he pockets it silently and trots off. Give him 50 cents and he howls his sorrow to

the world. And it is not hard to see why. "This time," he says to himself, "I've actually had the luck to catch a tourist who doesn't know the charges. At the very least he should be good for a dollar. And he gives me 50 cents. I've been done out of half a dollar." Hence the outpour of lamentation. It is as natural as the ill-temper of the golfer who has had the good luck to lay one on the lip of the hole from 30 yards away, and then complains for the rest of the round because he didn't sink it.

There are thousands of rickshaws in Singapore. Every street is full of them, and a long row of disengaged vehicles, with the owners touting for business or drowsing in the sun, stand along the kerbs. They all know, I suppose, that it is a short life and hardly a merry one. But while the struggle for existence is so fierce, and life remains the cheapest of all commodities, there will never be any shortage of Chinese coolies ready to run on till they burst their hearts and lungs for a wage of fivepence a mile.

This, however, I vowed in my disgust: no one was going to kill himself pulling me. I refused to believe that any human being can be so high, or another so low, that the one should be a beast of burden to the other; and to lend point to the principle, the face of my first rickshaw boy, a mask of death-in-life, kept haunting me like an evil dream.

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I kept my resolution for a month, hiring rickshaws only when I had no choice; and then, like the rest, I weakened. True, I never felt thoroughly happy in a rickshaw, and to the end

refused to allow a boy to run more than a mile or so without a spell of walking. But the average boy's blatant eagerness to take advantage of the slightest consideration soon killed a good deal of my sympathy, and by the time I reached Shanghai I contemplated writing a sketch describing a visitor's early disgust, gradual disillusionment and final onslaught on his boy.

"An excellent idea," said a friend. "But it so happens that the same thing has just been done by Somerset Maugham in one of the American magazines. If you are interested . . ."

I was . . . .

## CHAPTER VI

### IN THE CHINA SEA

Japan's Flapper Vanguard—I am Introduced to the South American Blues—And Dance with a Japanese Novelist.

THIS is the *Hakusan Maru*, bound from Singapore to Hongkong; and we are in the middle of the China Sea.

Opposite me as I write is a sleek-haired young man in horn-rimmed glasses reading *If Winter Comes*. On my right four others are playing bridge. A few feet away a young woman in a beautiful white frock, fur-trimmed and obviously from Paris, is talking French to her little girl. A bored young man in a Cambridge blazer is talking rugger. And at the other end of the saloon a girl is singing, in a well-trained but rather thin soprano, with quite a fair French accent, Gounod's *Serenade*.

Nothing strange in all this, you say. Oh, but I forgot to explain that all eight of them are Japanese.

One does not have to see Japan to realize the amazing rapidity with which she is changing. The passengers on this Nippon Yusen Kaisha liner are, of course, Europeanized exceptions rather than average Japanese. But they are the vanguard of an army that will soon rule Japan.

The men, with hardly an exception, wear faultlessly-cut silk suits, spotless shirts and neck-wear, and well-fitting shoes; and their dinner-suits are a credit to their tailor.

The women nearly all wear European one-piece washing frocks by day and orthodox evening dress by night. Their hair is marcelled, their earrings and necklaces are in the best taste, their rings are magnificent but never gaudy. Some of them, I am told, play quite a good game of tennis ; and at the fancy dress ball last night I discovered for myself that the majority dance tolerably well and in the latest London style.

One young married woman, a little made up, is even ahead of it. She has, it appears, been in Buenos Aires for a year.

" Do you know the South American Blues ? " she asked.

I told her, a little doubtfully, that I was not quite sure of the South American variety, but was willing to have a shot at it. The next moment I was seized in a grip like steel—a derivation of jiu-jitsu, I imagined—and found myself assisting, in a small way, at a performance that would have moved one of our ballroom crowds to ill-concealed mirth and (quite possibly) provoked the manager to remonstrance.

Some of the others were less advanced. One, when I asked her if she were dancing, smiled shyly, shook her head, and sat watching the others moving to the strains of the ship's gramophone. But after a quarter of an hour or so she changed her mind and chose to intimate the fact with a naïve and delightful indirectness. Rising in front of me as I strolled past, she burst into a stream of French which for a moment I found unintelligible. Then one phrase stuck.

" Trop petite, trop petite, moi," she repeated.

I assured her that she was not *trop petite*, and naturally renewed the invitation. And this time

she accepted with a " merci, monsieur," into which she managed to introduce a note of surprise that was really quite well done.

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The children, educated abroad in most cases, are even more European than their elders.

" Not dancing to-night ? " I gravely inquired of a fourteen-year-old youngster in an Eton suit.

" No, I fancy it's rather hot," he replied, " especially in these long bags."

His mother, a very charming woman entirely free from the furtiveness and maddening coyness of the average Japanese damsel, has spent ten years in America and England and speaks both English and Japanese. His father, a viscount connected with a great Japanese bank, talks four languages. But the precocious schoolboy and his brother Robert talk only the best public school English and are making a belated attempt to pick up some Japanese before they get home.

All this I learned from a friendly Japanese business man, who lounged in a deck chair beside me and threw some interesting and amusing little sidelights on our fellow-passengers.

" The gentleman over there," said he, nodding towards a stern-faced man with an iron jaw and big glasses, " is a viscount attached to the diplomatic service in Europe. His wife "—he indicated a slender, French-looking girl with a dainty oval face, black brows delicately arched over big liquid eyes, acquiline nose and prettily curved lips— " she is half Japanese and half French. The tall girl beyond, she is the richest heiress in Japan. You have heard of her, is it so ? The man playing his shot now "—he nodded towards a group intently

engaged in a game of deck golf—" he has been in France and Turkey. The lady next to him "—a short, slim figure in white, as dainty as a piece of old china—" that is his wife. She writes books and poems and compositions for newspapers. She likes to dance, but her husband, he does not dance, so he does not approve." (A truly human touch.) " The other night he got very angry because she dance. Also he get angry because she compose a song which another lady sing for us, and it is specified on the programme as ' by a well-known Japanese writer.' He say it is a disgrace to the other writers of Japan." (Apparently the fellow was full of these husbandly ideas.) " He does not like her to compose," added my friend. " You see, her poems take a long time, and she forget all about her child, and this make him very cross."

Later I ran against the pretty little authoress at the library.

" I am told that you write books," I said.

" Oui, oui," she said shyly, in her soft, small voice like a bird's cheep.

We spoke of her books for a moment, and I apologized for speaking French so badly.

" Non, non, monsieur, bien, très bien," she protested gently, with the courtesy of France and the deference of the East. And bowing her farewell, she departed with two volumes under her arm, possibly to care for the allegedly neglected child, but more probably to lose herself in the half-real world of dainty, childish romance and delicately coloured imaginings with which one instinctively associated her.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

Beautiful Hong-Kong—Once the Home of Pirates—Devastating Typhoons—At a Chinese Theatre—Through the Pirate Country—"In the Midst of Life"—Explorations in Old Canton—Marco Polo and the Wailing Coolie.

IF you have ever strolled along an art gallery, and stopped before a masterpiece with a sudden intake of the breath, then perhaps you can imagine how it feels to gaze for the first time upon Hong-Kong.

You pass some rocky islands, steam through a narrow channel, with high, moss-grown cliffs on either side, and find yourself in a land-locked harbour with a mountain towering above you. The city begins at the water's edge and is built up the slopes to the foot of a wall of rock rising gaunt and sheer. Here there is a break in the building; and then the wall slopes more gently and the houses begin again, and cease only at the summit.

A railway, with a staggering grade of about one in two, crawls like a great mechanical ant up the mountain side to the Peak Hotel, some 1,400 feet above sea level; and from the terminus you can either walk to the summit in ten minutes, or if you are rich as well as lazy, ride up in a swaying chair carried by two perspiring coolies.

The mountain is not very big as mountains go; a mere 1,800 feet or so, I think. But the view from the summit is, in the true sense of that ill-

used word, unique. Nothing, I suppose, could be more magnificent than the wilderness of mountains, wooded promontories and blue water that stretches away on every side from Hobart's Mount Wellington. But Hong-Kong is more than a landscape : it has in it something of the dramatic. A toy city, with nearly a million souls, is spread just beneath your feet—so close that you feel you could toss a stone into the very heart of it. In the little silver pool beyond lie a score of boats no bigger than those you used to put bravely forth to sea in, very long ago, whenever you could get the bathroom to yourself, Beyond the harbour lies the other city of Kowloon, with its huge docks and workshops ; and beyond that again is Asia, vast and mysterious, stretching into the illimitable distance. And on the other three sides, as you turn on your heel, you see scores of rocky islands and the deep blue sea stretching away to the dim and misty horizon.

If Hong-Kong is wonderful by day, it is miraculous by night. The Chinese, who constitute about 95 per cent. of the population, have a passion for illumination ; and the city, seen from the darkness of the harbour, is a blaze of lights fading from the fierce orange glow of the water front to the faint winking in the windows half a mile above. Along the water's edge are the warehouses, which the East calls go-downs ; to your right are the four and five storey restaurants of West Point, all glitter and noise ; and above rise the street lamps, and above them again the lamps on the very summit, until it really seems as if some enterprising American had obtained a contract for lighting heaven. To stand on the mountain top on a tropic night and gaze down upon the myriad

lights of the faintly murmuring city, and the lanterns of the junks reflected softly in the placid waters of the harbour, is to see something very like a child's idea of fairyland.

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## II. In the Path of the Typhoons

Hong-Kong, unlike most of the marvels of the East, is comparatively new—one of the youngest, in fact, of all the world's great cities. Eighty years ago the barren island was rotten with fever and inhabited mainly by the pirates who, from this hiding place, preyed upon passing shipping. To all these islands around the mouth of the Canton River the early Portuguese traders gave the name Ladrones (Thieves') Islands; and until Hong-Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842, after the first war with China, piracy was the island's only trade.

From that year, in spite of another war in 1847, and occasional conflicts with the yellow cut-throats who swarmed, and still swarm, along China's southern coast, the island began to make astonishing progress. In 1844 the tonnage entered and cleared amounted to 189,257 tons. To-day it is over 50,000,000 tons, and Hong-Kong, reckoned by tonnage, is the world's largest port. It is the storehouse and commercial depôt for south China, and the terminus of two great shipping services—one trading between Hong-Kong and Europe, the other between Hong-Kong and America.

In the early days of the colony the chief business was in opium, and it was on this unsavoury foundation that many of the millionaires and rich companies of the East have built up their fortunes. Then came the rise of the tea trade and the colourful days when the *Cutty Sark*, the *Thermopylae* and

many another famous clipper used to put into Hong-Kong for the precious cargoes with which they raced to the London market. To-day huge liners from all the Seven Seas, flying the flag of every maritime nation, lie anchored in the harbour, and the value of Hong-Kong's trade has reached the colossal total of £100,000,000 a year.

Were it not for one thing Hong-Kong would be the perfect port. It is visited by terrific typhoons. In the disaster of 1906 10,000 lives were lost, 2,400 Chinese craft were sunk and 59 foreign vessels were lost or damaged. On August 18, 1923, another great typhoon swept across the harbour at a velocity of 134 miles an hour—the highest wind velocity, I believe, ever recorded anywhere—and, in spite of the elaborate system by which shipping is warned of a typhoon's approach, overwhelmed a submarine, a steamer and countless junks, and drove twenty steamships ashore.

The disturbance passed almost as quickly as it came, the skies cleared again and Hong-Kong once more assumed that atmosphere of drowsy peace which always veils the menace of the East. But I saw the masts of the sunken steamer still rising above the water in mute testimony to the violence of the storm.

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### III. From a Box Seat

"Would you like to see a Chinese play?" asked an American friend. "Well, I'll have the boy bring an automobile around and we'll go right along. Too early? Hell, no. A Chinese play starts about seven and may take anything from five hours to three weeks to put through. The three-week affairs are going out of fashion now, but

even the snappiest of them are no striplings. I don't know what's on to-night, but I warn you that if you're going to see it through you'll need a heap of patience, a stamina like Jack Dempsey's and all the time there is."

This understood, we set out. Through narrow streets we went, and past huge, four-storey, brilliantly illuminated Chinese restaurants, with a band blaring from each, until at last we were set down at a door in a high brick wall. We climbed the dark and winding stairs, arrived at a well-lighted landing, and for the sum of one Mexican dollar and fifty cents, or about four shillings, were ushered ceremoniously into a box.

The drummer dropped his cigarette; a performer whose instrument I could not recognize removed his chewing-gum and stuck it on the edge of his chair, whence it could be retrieved later; and we knew that the performance was about to begin. Even so, that first discordant crash was rather startling. The Chinese love the blare and screech of brass, the crash of cymbals and the boom of drums almost as much as they love the glitter of gilt and mirrors; and a Chinese orchestra earnestly tries to give them all they want and (I should think) a little more. The result is a prolonged chaos of sound of which only one good thing can be said: it drowns the symphony of coughing, spitting and orange-sucking.

The play was as chaotic as the music. The title, we were told, was *Happiness Together*, so presumably it was some sort of a love story. But, judging merely from observation, one would never have suspected it. Nor could any other label be applied to this curious production. No sooner did a bit of buffoonery indicate farce than a gorgeously-

arrayed gentleman, wearing (as tradition prescribes) a beard almost down to his knees, would begin an oration that suggested historical drama. And, just when you were beginning to take the thing seriously, the old fellow, his beard grotesquely waggling, would break into the Chinese equivalent of a song and dance.

To add to the confusion, there was only one setting, and this had to serve for street scenes, interiors, and even a mountain top. Whenever a change was needed the producer followed the plan of the Elizabethans : a property man strolled on with a piece of a wall or a tree or an imitation boulder under his arm, set it down as a fair sample of the palace or forest or mountain required, and invited you to imagine the rest for yourself.

It was all delightfully casual. The stage hands wandered on and off in the midst of the action ; an actor, having been dragged off to captivity or death, would immediately reappear and stand chatting alongside the performers who really were " on " at the moment ; and if anyone in the audience felt so disposed he walked up and talked to his friends in the company. Even when three or four children rushed up and began to chatter shrilly to a fat mandarin—presumably their father—the audience took it all as a matter of course. Nor was there the slightest objection, so far as one could see, to vendors of fruit and ice-cream screaming their wares in valiant competition with the orchestra. . . . Personally, I preferred the vendors.

What that play was about I shall never know. Men and women—on the Chinese stage, by the way, women's parts are always played by boys or young men—continued to come and go. Long

speeches were delivered by the gentlemen with beards. The hero and heroine apparently fled to the mountains—though what I took for a mountain might really have been a chair or even a raft : one cannot be dogmatic about a Chinese play. The heroine was carried off by some savage or wild animal—at least she jumped on the back of a man wearing more hair than usual, and disappeared astride his shoulders. And there was much else that neither of us could make head or tail of.

But the audience seemed to enjoy it ; every one sucked noisily at oranges and other delicacies, and rolled bottles along the floor ; and the more daring of the young folk leaned a little closer.

" China," said my friend, nodding towards a couple who, in defiance of all Chinese precedent, were actually holding hands, " China is certainly coming on."

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Nine o'clock . . . ten o'clock . . . eleven o'clock . . . and the players seemed to be just getting into their stride. I looked at the American, and the American looked at me, and simultaneously we rose.

" It's quite possible," he said, " that this may finish to-night. But still . . ."

" Ah, mistah, you go ? You no come back ? " cried the disturbed manager, as we passed him near the ticket office, where, being a Chinese, he had probably been looting the cash box.

" Ezra," cried my very American friend, " you betcha life we no come back. We're through."

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### III. "In the Midst of Life"

When I reached Hong-Kong Dr. Sun Yat-sen had been reported dead. An official *communiqué*, issued ostensibly by the famous revolutionary leader himself, indignantly declared that he was alive. To settle the matter, a representative of a great news service journeyed to Canton and sought an interview, only to be turned away with the curt intimation—I fancy I can see the hand of Mr. Eugene Chen, his secretary, in its neat phrasing—that "Dr. Sun Yat-sen does not feel called upon to prove to anyone that he is not dead."

All this left the world still wondering, and so here I am, in a river boat bound for Canton, trying to solve the mystery for myself.

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Darkness, warm and soft, has fallen on the Canton River. There is no sign of life on the low, dim shores, and the world seems very still and quiet, and full of infinite peace. And yet the fact remains that we are in the heart of a region where pirates infest every river, vessels are taken almost every day, and no law is recognized save the law of the gun and the sword. On this same placid stream boats have been captured within the last few days; and though it is not likely—for we are well guarded—any one of the headlands and inlets along these vague, mysterious shores may even now hide a pirate craft waiting for just such a prize as our tubby and prosperous *Fat Shan*.

Fantastic, incredible, it seems to Western minds in this year 1924. But even as I write a tall, black-bearded Sikh, with rifle at the slope, passes and repasses the window on sentry go; in the bows and on the bridge above are look-outs gazing

intently into the night; and a few yards away a dozen men in uniform, some British, some Sikhs, are lounging on the deck with their loaded arms beside them and machine-guns ready for instant use.

You have to live in China to appreciate the conditions that have prevailed during these last few troubled years. Even in the regions not directly affected by civil war something closely approaching anarchy prevails, and every one feels at liberty to practise, if he can, the ancient Chinese principle that the strong shall live on the weak. Every swashbuckler who can persuade or bribe a few cut-throats to follow him takes to the highway. Every sailor who can steal a junk, a river boat or a launch joins the horde of pirates who infest the maze of rivers in the south-west and the inlets along the coast from Amoy right down to Cochin-China. Now and then some ruler makes a half-hearted attempt to dig the cut-throats out of their hiding places; but little ever comes of it, partly because no Chinese general can wholly rely on his troops. For it must be borne in mind that in China the terms soldier and bandit are practically synonymous. As long as he is paid the soldier fights for his general and (assuming that that worthy happens to be loyal at the moment) for his government. But if his pay is not forthcoming, and he is faced with the disagreeable prospect of having to go to work, he promptly turns pirate or bandit and robs former friend and foe with fine impartiality.

Even the highest military and naval officials are not wholly immune from this reversion to type. A few days ago a gunboat, its crew evidently bored with government service, suddenly hoisted the

black flag, attacked three or four junks and passenger boats, looted them and disappeared.

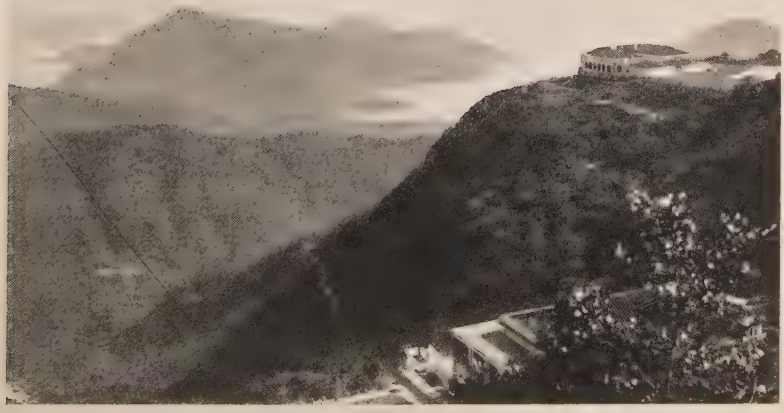
Piracy has even been organized on a commercial basis. I am informed that if one has a taste for piracy it is not hard to find wealthy Chinese merchants in Hong-Kong and elsewhere who will obligingly fit you out with a boat and arms in return for a share in the profits. So prosaic has the trade become that there was no great outcry when marauding parties seized a junk and a launch in Hong-Kong harbour ; and elsewhere it has long since ceased to cause surprise or even comment. Half the smaller outrages, especially those in the remoter districts, are not reported to the authorities ; and even when the news does filter through, the newspapers, long since *blasé*, describe the incident in an indifferent paragraph. Here, tacked on almost as an afterthought at the end of half a column headed " Canton News," is a typical example from a Hong-Kong daily :

ANOTHER PIRACY.

News from Kongmoon report another piracy on the West River, on the 26th inst., the victim being the *Hop Lee* passenger junk of the Kongmoon-Shekki service. The vessel was on her way to Shekki from Kongmoon and on reaching a place called Koochan was held up by a pirates' launch. After ransacking the junk the pirates kidnapped more than ten passengers. Six passengers were killed and three guards and four passengers were wounded.

And that's the complete story. If I were to pull you out of a boat and drown you in the Serpentine —assuming that to be possible—there would be a column account in all the newspapers and possibly a photograph of your corpse looking most unpleasantly cold and clammy. But when a Chinese ves-

REMAINS OF THE TEMPLE OF THE FIVE HUNDRED GENII, CANTON.
(Pulled down by order of Sun Yat-sen.)



FROM THE PEAK, HONG-KONG.

sel is captured, six people are killed, seven wounded and ten or more held for ransom, the episode is dismissed in China with exactly twelve lines. For piracy is so commonplace that it has been accepted, like war, famine and disease, as part of the natural order of things and is no longer regarded as news.

Truly, as the Prayer Book beautifully reminds us, "in the midst of life we are in death." More especially in China.

Since they began to carry guards and travel, whenever possible, in convoys, European vessels have not had much trouble. Four missionaries were captured not long ago, however, and were asked by an optimistic bandit to provide 200,000 dollars, 100 Mausers and 300 rounds of ammunition for each. He might as well have demanded Rolls-Royces all round. In the end two missionaries were released and raised enough to ransom the party.

The missionaries were not tortured, but others are not always so lucky, as you may judge from the experience of Wong Kam, the servant of an official of the Asiatic Petroleum Company. Captured with forty-eight others on a Cheung Chan ferry boat, he was taken to one of three mountain fastnesses held by some 3,000 bandits. Those captives who looked good for satisfactory ransoms were not badly treated. The others were introduced to a device called, in the flowery Chinese way, "the monkey stealing a peach." The victim's hands were tied and passed over his bent knees, a bamboo was thrust through the triangle between his knees and his arms, and he was suspended head down from a tree with a stone fastened to each big toe. The chief then flogged him, and when he had amused himself the others

followed suit. When the prisoner recovered consciousness the treatment was repeated three or four times.

Six prisoners died from hardship and torture. Another was shot for attempting to escape. An old woman with no one to ransom her was led out on the pretext that she was being taken to a theatre, was forced to put on a palm-leaf coat, drenched with kerosene and set on fire. And, infuriated at the inadequacy of the ransom offered, the bandits boiled one little boy alive and sent the body to his parents.

These things are not pleasant to contemplate, but some of the demands were not without humour. When Wong Kam was ransomed, for instance, his gaolers charged a professional fee of six dollars for knocking off his irons, and another six dollars for ceremoniously escorting him out of the prison.

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## IV. In Old Canton

Was I dreaming, or was there really some one in my cabin—some one who kept repeating, in a voice full of suave insinuation, the same insistent phrase ?

With consciousness fighting against sleep, I opened my eyes and blinked at a fellow who, if looks went for anything, was undoubtedly a pirate. (I found later that he was not a pirate. He had no need to be. He made a better and safer living out of people like me.)

" Mastah," he observed, with a bob of the head and a smile of gratification, " you like guide ? "

" No," I said. " No like guide." Which (seeing that the rascal had somehow got aboard

the boat and entered my cabin at 6.30 a.m.) showed really praiseworthy moderation, I think.

"But mastah, me savee English welly well," he began; and the end was inevitable. At nine o'clock he plunged into the labyrinth of alleys and burrows that Canton calls streets, and I meekly followed.

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Canton is one of the oldest, most historic and most characteristic of all China's cities. There are not more than a thousand Europeans, and they all live on the island of Shameen—a cool oasis of shady avenues, white houses and green trees, set down in the midst of a wilderness of buildings and teeming life.

But the quiet Shameen is a place apart. In Canton itself you see Chinese life *au naturel*, without any of the European veneer of Shanghai and Hong-Kong. The streets are so narrow that in many of them two wheelbarrows would be hard put to it to pass. The dimly lit and heavily barred houses lean over and almost shut out the sky above. And everywhere you see swarms of little yellow people working at the same trades that their ancestors followed a thousand years and more ago, and in many cases using much the same tools.

Not that the march of science has left the place wholly untouched. In this very room where I am writing one up-to-date fellow threw a bomb a few weeks ago at the Governor of Indo-China and carelessly killed six others.

* * * * *

"This Medicine Street," announced the guide, as he turned down between long rows of open-fronted shops packed with boxes and tins full of

herbs; and he led me on past furniture shops; smithies where yellow figures, stripped to the waist, were swinging hammers and sweating over forges; chemist shops where toothbrushes were displayed by the gross at 10 cents (*2d.*) each; silk shops, all with the doors carefully barred to keep out robbers, soldiers and people like that; and, finally, to a place where a man and his three sons were turning out kingfisher ware. Kingfisher ware, Sun Yat-sen and shawls are the three things for which Canton is famous.

Here I stood and watched one boy at work. In front of him lay some of the beautiful feathers of the kingfisher, shot with all the colours of the rainbow. In his left hand he held a metal butterfly brooch covered with gum; in his right was an implement with a razor-sharp blade at one end.

The blade flashed, and a piece of feather was sliced off, trimmed with two or three adroit touches, and stuck in position; and now the butterfly had a wing. A second later it had another. And so he went on with magic fingers, juggling with tiny fragments so marvellously that within five minutes there lay before me a gorgeously coloured butterfly, complete even to its eyes, and looking as if about to take flight.

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On our right were steaming cauldrons, and from the shanty within came a prodigious shouting and clatter of plates.

"Coolie eating house," explained the guide. "Macaroni, vermicelli, 10 cents. Welly good. You look-see, tly dish."

"No, thank you," I said politely.

"Don't mensh," returned the guide, not to be outdone. I wondered for a second whether he was trying to be funny, but discovered later that if you say "Thank you" to a Chinese in Hong-Kong or thereabouts he usually says "don't mensh."

We rambled on through crowded streets where not more than three or four people could walk abreast. The air was heavy with the characteristic, clinging Chinese smell that is the product, I imagine, of incense and filth. Coolies, heavily laden, staggered by; and now and then we had to press back against the wall to make room for chair boys crying their incessant "char ra, char ra"—get out of the way, get out of the way.

Twenty years ago, the guide told me with pride in the city's progress, "allee people more higher up" travelled by chair, because the streets were too narrow for rickshaws. Now there were more than 1,000 rickshaws and many cars.

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Finally, with the air of one who had built it, the guide showed me the Temple of the Five Hundred Genii. But most of it is only a ruin to-day. Like other temples, it has been pulled down by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, and the site has been sold; and so all I could see at first was half an acre of ground littered with bricks and stones which gangs of women were carrying away.

"Women more cheap, only 60 cents a day. But more slow, not so good," commented the guide—evidently a conservative on the sex question.

One portion of the temple—the home of the Five Hundred—was still standing. Stepping over the idlers who slept outside the door with stones

beneath their heads for pillows, we entered and walked between long rows of big gilded figures, before each of which a candle and joss-stick were burning. With sudden interest I noticed that amongst these distinguished generals, statesmen, and philosophers was one with a flat hat and bristling moustache, unmistakably a European.

"That Marco Polo," I was told. And I fell to marvelling anew at the daring that, seven hundred years ago, had taken the great Venetian across the heart of Asia to Cathay.

"Him first Portuguese visit China," the guide volunteered.

"Portuguese?" I looked at him reproachfully, wondering whether the rest of his information had been equally reliable.

"Well, some say he Korean," he added hurriedly.

"Cuthbert," I said—it is an excellent jest to call a Chinese Cuthbert; our grandfathers admitted it, "you're only making it worse. We'd better go."

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On the way out I nearly fell over a coolie kneeling before a huge statue.

"That Kin Lung," I was told. "He reign forty year, no fighting, evelything cheap. Welly smart Empelah."

One could scarcely avoid the obvious reflection that if this brief biography were accurate China could do with a few more Kin Lungs.

The coolie was shaking up a jar full of sticks, numbered from 1 to 100. He let one fall, snatched it up and rushed across to a table to find out from an index what meaning attached to his number.

A wail of disappointment proclaimed that it was not a lucky one.

"Bad number," remarked the guide, as he unceremoniously grabbed the fateful stick. "Bad people against him."

The coolie stood motionless for a full minute with unseeing eyes and trembling lips. Then he fell on his knees again and began to rock himself to and fro in his misery. Even outside the temple I could still hear him muttering the prayers prescribed for such evil predicaments as his; but I doubt whether they brought the poor devil much comfort.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ASIA'S STORMY PETREL

Chaos at Canton—I visit Sun Yat-sen—He blames the Powers for China's Troubles—"The World's Next Battlefield"—His Strange Personality and Amazing Adventures—A Professional Plotter—Kidnapped in London—The Idol of Young China.

MY chief reason for visiting Canton was, as I have said, to test the report that Dr. Sun Yat-sen was dead and his Government nearing its fall.

I found conditions even worse than I had expected. What I saw in Canton was sufficient to convince me that unless help came from some quarter—and his only friends were the Bolsheviks and Chang Tso-lin—the "Republic of the South" was on the very brink of collapse. Sun's army was on half-pay—which scarcely helps to overcome the deep-rooted disinclination of the Chinese for anything in the nature of actual combat—and the city was rapidly drifting into a condition of anarchy. Thousands of soldiers were wandering around the streets, lightly playing with the triggers of loaded rifles and automatic pistols and apparently looking for practice; many shopkeepers had their doors strongly barred against robbers, whether in uniform or mufti; and as a consequence of Sun Yat-sen's inability to maintain law and order the merchants were organizing a Mercantile Defence Corps on Fascist principles.

In the circumstances it is not surprising that Sun had shown a disposition to let others carry on the campaign against the Peking Government and was concentrating all his considerable but erratic talent on keeping himself in the saddle—one of the few causes for which his enthusiasm never weakens.

But then, that was always Sun's way. When he and Chang Tso-lin agreed to attack the Peking Government two years ago, the arrangement was that while Chang swept down from the north Sun was to send an army from the south and thus take Wu Pei-fu, the central Government's great general, between two fires. But Sun, characteristically enough, delayed setting out till he heard the result of the decisive battle around Tientsin ; and then, his ally having been routed, discreetly returned to Canton.

When the recent struggle was planned he first gave Chang the same kindly assurances and then was compelled by poverty to disband most of his troops and to announce that he could give the Manchu leader only moral support—a form of assistance which the practical Chinese assesses at its true value.

All this merely stimulated my curiosity and increased my anxiety to meet the famous rebel leader ; but, as my Hong-Kong friends had warned me, it was one thing to come to Canton, and quite another thing to get an audience. Apart from his annoyance over the report of his death, Sun Yat-sen was in the midst of a crisis on which his republic and perhaps his life depended, and conferences with advisers and generals were taking up every minute of his time. Still, I decided to have a shot at it, and after considerable difficulty

and some experiences that were not without their interest and humour, I succeeded in penetrating the cordon of soldiers around the Generalissimo's headquarters, and found myself waiting in a plainly furnished reception room.

"Dr. Sun Yat-sen," announced Mr. Eugene Chen, his private secretary; and, turning towards the door, I found myself face to face at last with the strangest figure in Asia.

I saw a man of medium height and build, with a smooth face, observant dark eyes that twinkled now and then, greyish hair going a little thin on top, and a closely cropped moustache. He was dressed all in white, as is the custom in the East; but instead of the European suit affected by most educated Orientals, he wore a Chinese robe buttoning around the neck and falling almost to the ankles. His age I should have set down at about fifty. Actually he is seven years older.

I explained the object of my visit, and Sun Yat-sen, whose English is quite good, though not as remarkable as that of the Oxford-trained Mr. Chen, talked readily enough of his aims, his difficulties and (especially) his grievances against the Powers.

"The chief obstacle to peace and the political unification of China," he told me, "is the Foreign Powers' continued recognition of the Peking party. Foreigners imagine that the section in control of Peking must necessarily be accepted as the Government of China, regardless of the fact that Canton is an older and more historic city with a far larger commerce. Actually Peking does not even speak for the north. So long as the duel between Wu Pei-fu and Chang Tso-lin goes on the Peking Government is only another name for the Chihli party, of which Wu Pei-fu is the dominant figure.

In according international recognition to Peking, therefore, the Powers are merely backing Wu Pei-fu against other leaders and parties."

When a Chinese has a grievance it always has its origin in finance. Sun's complaint was that the Powers, by collecting the customs and Salt Gabelle revenues (as they are authorized to do under the Boxer Indemnity agreement) and handing over the surplus to Peking, were actually subsidizing the North against the South.

" Outsiders do not realize the extent to which we are dominated by the foreigner," he said. " China is virtually a colony of the Powers without any of a colony's privileges. In this province of Kwang-tung, for instance, foreigners (mostly British) not only collect the revenues but, after deducting enough to cover the cost of collection and foreign debts, hand over the rest, amounting to £500,000 or £600,000 a year, to the Peking Government. They call it paying the ' consolidated internal debts of China.' Which means, in plain language, the debts incurred by the North in fighting against the South. In other words, we have to help maintain the armies which are fighting against us."

" The position, it seems, is not without its humour," I commented.

" Quite so," interjected Mr. Chen. " But you cannot expect us to regard it with quite the same detachment."

I had heard that Sun was inclining towards Bolshevism—he has since reached an understanding with Moscow and openly turned Red, even to the extent of changing his flag—and his next few words showed that for once rumour was not mistaken.

" If their diplomats are to be believed the Powers

are all working for the good of China," he said with a cynical smile. "If so they are going the wrong way to work. The strong party in China is not the reactionary but the revolutionary party. That has been proved time and again. But, after all, this is not the first time the Powers have backed the wrong horse. Before 1911 they were behind the Manchus. Yet we overthrew the Manchus in spite of all the Powers. Now they are treating China exactly as they treated France a hundred years ago and Russia after the Revolution. What business had they to send troops to Russia? Some day they will learn that there has been created in that country a force which all the Powers with all their bayonets cannot crush. And it is the same with China. The Powers say they want a liberal government and a strong man; yet always they support the weaker man, the worse man and the principles of reaction. In their own interests as well as ours they would be wise to mend their policy, for at present, though they may not see it, they are drifting towards war. The Balkan and Turkish questions are settled; Russia is re-establishing herself; China alone is in chaos. With so much wealth at stake, and so many great military Powers interested, it will be strange if this is not the world's next battlefield."

Much also he said to the same effect, and he said it vigorously and well. But when I say vigorously I am referring to what he said, not to the way he said it, for it is characteristic of the man that even when he talked of the issues that meant life and death to his cause, and quite probably to him, there was not the slightest change of tone or manner. The average Westerner in the same position would have allowed emotions to play about his face,

thumped the table now and then to emphasize his protests, raised his voice a little, and altogether addressed me, in Queen Victoria's phrase, as if I were a public meeting. But not so Sun Yat-sen. Opposed to him were several leaders who, if he fell into their hands, would probably give him short shrift. Pirates and bandits were everywhere—though, not being troubled by them himself, he doubtless bore this affliction with considerable fortitude. And every day he had conferences to preside over and decisions to make that would tell after a time even on the stolidest European's nerves.

But all these things he discussed with the air of a vicar at a garden party. Though at times his words were forcible his hands never moved, his features never lost their genial suavity. If ever a man had the " poker face " that man is Sun Yat-sen.

In part, of course, this impassiveness is accounted for by heredity and training. But Sun Yat-sen is something more than a stolid Oriental: he is a born intriguer, one of the great adventurers of the ages, a Borgia born late and born yellow.

Just consider his amazing career from the time when, as a young graduate of Hong-Kong University, he began to preach democracy to the people of China. This was not a safe experiment in the days of the Manchus, and Sun Yat-sen fled to Europe just in time to save his head. But the old Empress had a long arm. Her agents followed him to London and he was kidnapped and imprisoned in the Chinese Embassy while arrangements were being made to ship him secretly aboard a vessel leaving for the East. Fortunately for him a letter which he threw out of the window of his prison was picked

up and taken first to a friend and then to the British Foreign Office, and the authorities stepped in at the last minute to save him from the Empress's vengeance. Precisely what that charming old lady would have done to him is uncertain, but it is safe to say that it would have been prolonged and unpleasant. Even in the East, where the standard in these matters is high, her torturers had a reputation for being rather adroit.

Warned by this narrow shave, Sun confined his activities mainly to propaganda abroad—work for which he has quite a genius. He kept in close touch with the revolutionaries, however, and when the dynasty was overthrown in 1911 he was universally accepted as one of the big figures of Young China and was one of the nominees for the Presidency. To avert a hopeless civil war with Yuan Shih-kai, the other nominee, who firmly held Peking, Sun resigned and accepted a position as Director-General of Railways at a modest £40,000 a year. Then, only a week or so after his unfortunate attempt to revive the Empire, Yuan died; and after some years of intermittent fighting and negotiation, Sun Yat-sen was installed—or to be more precise, installed himself—at Canton in opposition to Yuan's successor at Peking.

Since then Sun's career has continued to develop on approved "movie" lines. First of all General Chen Chiung-ming, who had helped him to drive out the usurper Mu, revolted against his chief and Sun had to escape on a British gunboat. Then, with the aid of mercenaries from the provinces of Yunnan and Kwangsi, Sun's allies recaptured Canton in 1922 and he returned from Shanghai and re-established himself in control. This time he took the title of Generalissimo, presumably with

the idea of strengthening his hold over his army of generals.

And there, strange to say, he still is. He has no money, his subjects have been completely disillusioned by his failure to maintain a stable government and carry on essential public services, his troops cannot be relied upon, he has enemies all around him, and few foreigners have a good word to say for him ; but his instinct for self-preservation remains unimpaired and he still has the acrobat's knack of falling always on his feet. A few months ago he was again in headlong flight while his " Reds " carried on a furious struggle against the Merchant Volunteers, in the course of which a portion of the town was burned. But as I write he is not only in control of Canton once more but, in consequence of the defeat of Wu Pei-fu by Chang Tso-lin (aided by Wu's own " Christian General "), is at Peking with a chance of becoming President of all China.

Just what the future holds for him depends mainly upon what sort of bargain he can strike with Chang Tso-lin and the militarists of Peking, for in the realm of action, as distinct from intrigue, he is constitutionally incapable of doing anything for himself. An intriguer by instinct, a revolutionary by profession and a muddler by habit, Sun has never yet struck a decisive blow for any cause, and it is safe to say he never will. Give him a platform or a pen and there is no military feat of which he is incapable. No one in these times is more adept at slaying an enemy with an epigram and routing whole armies with a phrase. But he has yet to prove himself a practical statesman. Time after time Fate has placed great opportunities in his hands, and always he has failed because, for

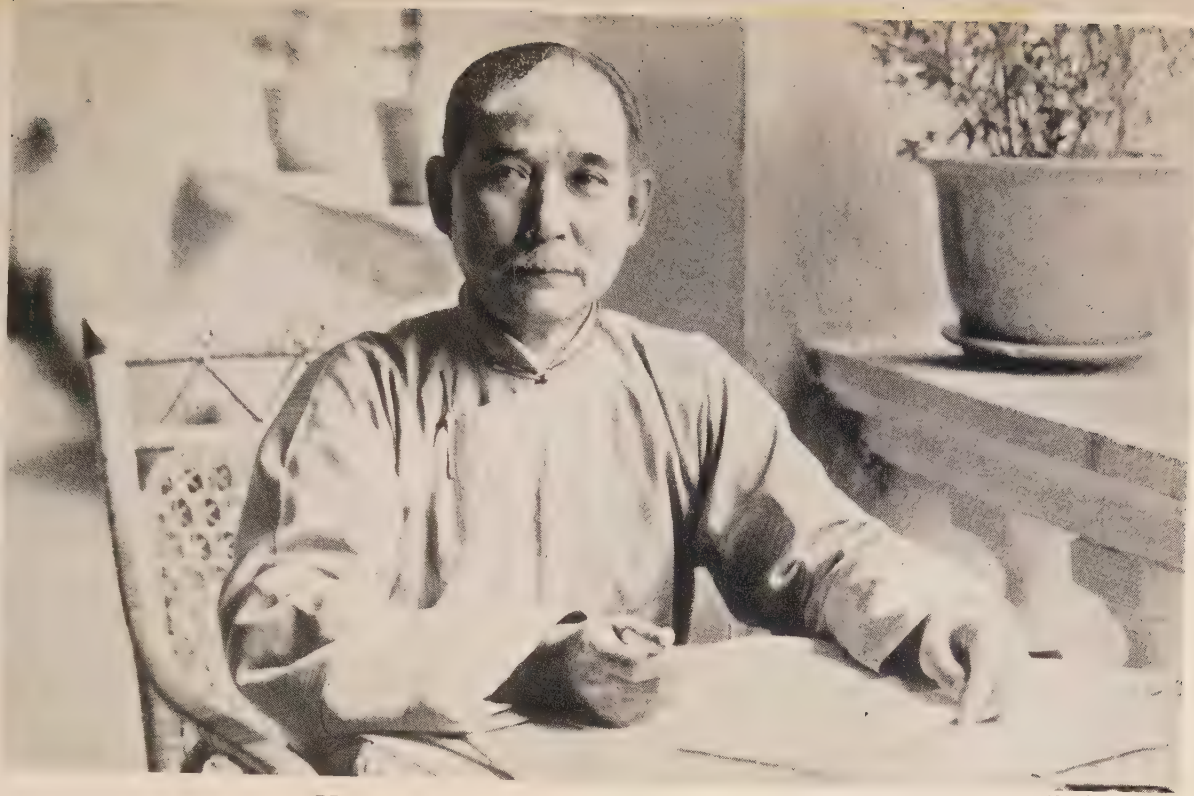
all his qualities of intellect and imagination, he lacked the driving force and hard common sense that go to make a successful ruler.

Sun's fitness to govern any enterprise may be judged from the plan that was the first fruit of his appointment to the position of Director-General of Railways—the consolation prize offered him by Yuan Shih-kai in return for the withdrawal of his claim to the Presidency.

" I want the railways built like that," he told the foreign engineers ; and he proudly displayed a map of China which, regardless of mountains, chasms, rivers, cities and all other obstacles and assets whatsoever, he had neatly divided into hundreds of little squares.

Still, Sun Yat-sen is an extraordinary man with a good deal of the genuine patriot and idealist mixed up with his charlatanry ; and some would not be sorry if he had his chance. Failure though he is as a practical administrator, he is the biggest intellectual force in China and the leader of the intellectual radicals ; and after all, they probably speak, if anyone does, for the China of tomorrow. The great mass of the people know little of the issues at stake, and care even less. Till fifteen years ago they were robbed and bullied by civil and military swashbucklers who owed obedience and a share of the profits to the Emperors. Now they are robbed and bullied in precisely the same way. Exactly where the money goes, and whether the local governor happens to be a Peking man, or a Sun Yat-sen man, or in business for himself, are to them questions of merely academic interest.

Whether the administration of the country would be cleaner and more efficient under Sun—it



DR. SUN YAT-SEN, THE FAMOUS CHINESE REVOLUTIONARY. [*Topical Press.*

ould not be much worse—is a question on which eople differ. But it would be very interesting to vatch him at work, for Sun, with all his faults, is a rogressive. In Canton he has pulled down houses o widen streets ; and he has had the temerity not nerely to use temples as barracks, but to demolish hem and sell the material and sites.

The hostility of most Europeans to Sun Yat-sen rises, I fancy, not so much from dislike of his deals as from a desire to see order restored at any rice. " Wherever Sun Yat-sen is," they always ell you, " there is bound to be trouble." The ame thing might have been said of Washington, aribaldi, Mazzini and a thousand others whose ames are now revered. Even if Sun Yat-sen be ot the man to save China, it is not sufficient to ondemn him simply because he is a stirrer up of trife. Everything depends upon the validity of deals he is fighting for. And before final judgnent is passed on that point, it must be remembered that, muddler in practical affairs though he nay be, he played a great part in shaping the ideals n which the Republic is founded and is still the orch-bearer and idol of Young China.

## CHAPTER IX

### SHANGHAI

I Sail by a Dutchman—And Meet a Curious Russian—The Diverting Story of his Misfortunes—Comedy and Tragedy amongst the Russian Refugees—Shanghai the Ugly and Fascinating—Primitive Business and Up-to-Date Crime —Aged Philanthropist's Quaint Plea.

RETURNING to Hong-Kong just in time to miss the *Empress of Asia*, I had to book my passage to Shanghai on a Dutchman. She was to leave at seven o'clock, they told me ; and so at four o'clock I strolled back to the Hong-Kong hotel to pack.

" Good heavens ! " cried a friend, " don't you know your boat goes at 4.30 ? "

I pointed out that it was advertised to leave at seven.

" Oh, take no notice of that," he said impatiently. " The time has been altered. You have half an hour to pack, get your things to the wharf, and get out to the boat in a launch. You *may* just do it."

I threw my clothes together—incidentally overlooking a watch and a razor-strop ; my friend urged on the coolies with praise and curses ; an extra 50 cents increased the vibration of the engine, and possibly the speed of the launch, until I feared the old tub would burst her sides ; and precisely at the half-hour I bounded triumphantly up the gangway and waved good-bye as the launch pushed off.

"Good day," said a friendly voice; and I turned to find the captain beaming on me after the manner of kindly Dutchmen. "You arrive in a hurry, eh?"

"It *was* rather a rush," I admitted. "I didn't know till half an hour ago that you were leaving at 4.30."

The captain coughed.

"I fear there again has been a slight alteration," he murmured. "A little difficulty with the coal—a mere nothing. We leave at seven to-morrow morning."

"*To-mor——?*"

I sat down and mopped my forehead weakly . . .

She was a remarkably steady boat—for which I had good cause to be thankful when we ran into the edge of a typhoon off Formosa—but, as I had feared, hardly entertaining. Of the other three passengers, one stayed in his bunk and ate nothing. The other stayed in the saloon, and ate everything.

The third was a Russian travelling steerage.

* * * * *

**II. Amongst the Refugees**

For a couple of days I saw nothing of the Russian. Then, wandering aimlessly about the ship, I heard a sudden gust of uproarious laughter; and around the corner I came on the good-looking young surgeon and a thin, fair-haired fellow of about thirty. "He," explained the surgeon, when he was able to speak, "he is Russian refugee. Ha! ha! ha!"

Hitherto I had imagined that Russian refugees were rather tragic. But the surgeon continued to laugh as at some exquisite jest, while the Russian,

only half-comprehending, looked at us with a sheepish smile.

"He come to Java, but no money he haf," gurgled the surgeon. "He is dancer by profession, also musician, so he go to Chinese café and offer to play piano. They say, 'All right, but we give you nodings. What guests give you, you keep.' He play from eight o'clock to twelve, and no cent he get—nodings, nodings. Ha! ha! ha! That night he sleep in street, and all day no food he haf. Next night he play all evening, at a Javanese cinema, and der manager give him 20 cents—in your money, fourpence. Ha! ha! With this he haf meal, but not what you call hearty. Ha! ha! ha!"

Had the surgeon been a Frenchman I could have understood it, but I had never associated such astonishing flippancy with the Dutch. Later I discovered that he was born in Poland, took his degree in Germany, practised in Switzerland, and took a job in Holland. So perhaps that accounted for it.

The Russian listened with a cheerful smile while the surgeon continued, with gusto and much laughter, the story of his sorry adventures up to the point where the police, finding him starving in the street, arrested him and shipped him back to Shanghai. "And so to-morrow he lands, and not one cent he haf. Ha! ha! ha!"

The surgeon dissolved once more into helpless laughter, the Russian joined him, and since there is nothing so infectious as merriment, I found myself laughing too, as if the Russian's penniless past and equally unpromising future were the funniest things in the world.

Secretly I considered the surgeon's mirth quite

shockingly callous ; but on reaching Shanghai I soon learned why the woes of Russian refugees no longer excite the pity that might be expected.

In the first place, Shanghai has had more than its share of Russians. You find them everywhere : Russian head-waiters ; Russian teachers ; Russian musicians ; Russian tradesmen (a few) ; Russian cabaret dancers (in hundreds) ; Russian soldiers out of work, wearing the last rags of their old finery ; Russian diplomats, with nothing left save their dignity ; Cossacks, earning a few shillings by trick-riding ; Russians selling newspapers in the streets in competition with Chinese ; even Russian coolies. Some poor devils went so far as to take out licences as rickshaw boys, and had the authorities not intervened, would have treated the world to the spectacle of white men becoming as beasts of burden to any smug Chinese with 20 cents. And of course there are hundreds of Russian women following the oldest profession in the world.

Altogether the Russian population of Shanghai is estimated at about ten thousand—some put it much higher. Many are unable to find regular work and must accept charity or starve. And as the rich merchants of the East—mostly Chinese, Bagdad Jews and Armenians—are noted more for their wealth than for their benevolence, the Russians are neither affluent nor popular.

Even the most kindly European tends to become a little weary of the so-called refugee, simply because it is nearly always the worthless types with which he comes into contact. Real sorrow hides itself ; but there is no reticence about the parasites of Shanghai. They hang around the cabarets, trade upon your sympathy, and in some cases fall lower still. Even when the scene has lost its

novelty it is not pleasant to see a white woman walk off arm in arm with a yellow man, or a man of your own colour whining for coppers more abjectly than a Chinese beggar.

All this degradation is tragic enough in itself, but there is another aspect. In a place like Shanghai, with a colony of 30,000 whites in the midst of 1,500,000 Asiatics, the Europeans must rigidly draw the colour line and maintain their status, or they would find life insupportable. Now for the first time the coolie, sniggering in his enjoyment, sees white men reduced to his level, and white women living with Chinese ; and the reaction has been prompt and profoundly disturbing. White women, who used to be sacrosanct, are being accosted by Chinese in the streets, and the respect that the white races have enjoyed for generations is fast vanishing. The white of 1950, I think, will not find China a very pleasant place to live in.

* * * * *

Before reaching Shanghai I had heard men rave, as men do in these lands where women are few, about the Russian dancers who earned their living in the halls. There were scores of them, I was told, at every cabaret ; and I vaguely pictured long rows of Pavlovas waiting to rise, with becoming grace, at an invitation framed in courteous French.

What I really saw, when a friend showed me around, was a dress parade of big, heavy, raw-boned, coarse-featured, crudely-dressed women, with painted faces and badly peroxided hair. I had expected Russian aristocrats, and found Siberian peasants. They walked badly and danced worse, knew no French, spoke very little English (which did not matter), and when they did speak

it were exceedingly boring (which mattered a great deal). And of course the name of each was Sonia . . .

Most of them kept up the refugee's pose and got off a little patter . . . " My father, ze General," and " My uncle, ze Baron, ze Bolsheviks kill heem, and I have to fly across ze border. Very bad men ! "

But what one girl told me with delightful candour about herself was probably true of the majority.

" Ze Bolsheviks make me work," she said, as she held out a roughened hand. " I no like work, so I leave—clear out."

" Naturally," I agreed.

Later I saw cabaret dancers of a different type—slimmer, prettier, better-dressed, and, incredible though it seems, even thirstier. Their passion for champagne may have been due to the heat, or there may be some significance in the fact that cabaret girls of the East are paid a commission on all drinks. Anyway, I know of no circle in which the total abstainer is regarded with less favour.

Seeing women like these, who came to Shanghai because they wanted to, and cling to the cabarets because they like the life, people are apt to forget that there really are genuine refugees. But go around with some of the mission workers in Shanghai and you will find hundreds, or even thousands, of Russians over whom tragedy still hangs—wives who saw their husbands butchered ; children whose parents were killed before their eyes ; hardly a man, woman or child who did not lose some loved one as well as every worldly possession. Their plight when they reached Shanghai was pitiful ; and even now, in some cases, it is little better.

They work, these outcasts, at any job they can get. The men will sell newspapers, or do the work of coolies for a coolie's wage. The women will sew or scrub, or do anything else that is honest, in a last endeavour to avoid the easier way.

But you don't see this type around the dance halls. They hide in tumble-down houses in mean Chinese streets, and, when they see you coming, turn down a side street rather than let a white man look upon their shame.

* * * * *

### III. Shanghai

Shanghai is the largest and richest city on the Continent of Asia, is built on a rather unattractive branch of the great Yangtsze-kiang, is cursed with a climate of great extremes, is as flat as a pancake, has hardly a building worth looking at save for a few foreign banks and offices, and (so far as I know) has few, if any, historic relics.

True, the names of the streets have poetry in them and a fine historic ring. What could be more delightful than the Bubbling Well Road? And I shall never forget the thrill of excitement and delight which ran through me when I rode one night along the Hankow Road, and a minute later found myself in the Peking Road. I pictured, as the rickshaw rolled along, a road built by toiling millions a thousand years ago and more; a great highway, such as the Romans loved to build, which went on and on and ended only in the far-off capital.

But what was this?—the Thibet Road? I felt that there was something wrong. I was prepared to believe that there was a road all the way from Shanghai to Peking. Not knowing China, I saw no

reason why there shouldn't be. But I was convinced that there was no road from Shanghai to Thibet . . .

Later I learned that there was no road leading from Shanghai anywhere. (In China there never is.) The streets that go one way are called after cities ; the streets that go the other way are called after provinces. Simple, but hardly romantic.

" Don't tell me that there isn't a well in the Bubbling Well Road," I pleaded ; and it was comforting to know that there really is a well—you can see it for yourself—and that it really does bubble.

But if Shanghai has its limitations it also has its assets. The tripper who hungers for " sights," and counts no day well spent unless he can tick off three or four in his guide-book, will probably go away disappointed. The man who puts people before places, and, above all, the man with a weakness for clubs, lively cabarets, whisky, cards, dancing and racing—if it be a weakness to like these things—will find Shanghai one of the jolliest places imaginable. It lies on one of the world's main highways, a constant stream of celebrities of all nations drift through—Pavlova was dancing when I arrived—and its atmosphere has none of the fustiness peculiar to white communities surrounded always by a tide of colour. You find many places in the East where the Europeans live, if not exactly by taking in each other's washing, at all events for the pleasure of airing each other's dirty linen. Shanghai's sins—and even since the end of the " Trenches " it has plenty—smack rather less of Suburbia.

And there are other things I like about Shanghai : its unexpectedness, for instance, and the little

mysteries that you stumble on at every turn. Riding at random through the streets one night I saw a glittering new Vauxhall drawn up outside a one-story hovel in a dark side street—a place with rotting wooden walls, boarded windows and rags stopping every crack. What was the lure? Opium? An assignation? I could only guess.

A minute later, passing a terrace of squalid flats, I heard a really brilliant pianoforte rendering of Chopin's *Marche Funèbre*. Who was the pianist? A Russian musician driven to the depths by poverty? Some cultured and accomplished woman who had sold herself to a Chinese?

God knows. A tragedy of some sort was being played out behind those dingy walls. But nobody knew, and in the East few care.

* * * * *

**IV. One of the Fine Arts**

If I wanted proof of the casual spirit of the East, I had it next day. Standing at a corner, I saw a sweating coolie push a heavily laden wheelbarrow through the traffic, and, in obedience to the policeman's signal, come to a halt.

"What has he got there?" I asked, staring at what looked like solid silver ingots, but obviously couldn't be.

"Silver," I was told.

"Silver! A barrow-load of it? Pushed through the streets by a coolie without arms or escort?"

My friend laughed.

"Oh, yes, that's the way it's always carried in Shanghai," he assured me. "A New York business man became rather excited one day when he saw a party of coolies dragging a hundred thousand

dollars' worth of silver from the Customs House to one of the banks ; and I believe he tried to establish a clearing house. But the idea was regarded as quite indecently revolutionary, and of course nothing came of it."

After that it was not very surprising to learn that when one bank wants to send ten thousand dollars or so to another bank it entrusts the cash to a Chinese coolie receiving a wage of about six shillings a week. A few days before, it seemed, a footpad had held up a messenger strolling along with five thousand dollars tucked under his arm ; and the only feature of the affair that anyone regarded as peculiar was the fact that the coolie escaped.

The luck of the fellow excited mild surprise, for if China is a land of primitive business, it is also the land of efficient and up-to-date crime. The merchant who settles your account will calculate on a board of counters, and pay you in cash, just as his ancestors did ten centuries ago. But the bandit who robs you at the first corner will use a Mauser automatic pistol, throw pepper in your eyes, and dash off in a high-power American motor-car. In a country of archaic business and casual officials the desperado alone shows a proper appreciation of the value of modern science.

The Chinese are reckoned a peaceable race, and somehow one never associates them with deeds of violence. America, on the other hand, is universally accepted as the place where the genuine desperado is to be seen in his fine flower. But for sheer ruthless villainy and cold-blooded daring, I would back a Chinese cut-throat against any two-gun man or bobbed-haired bandit who ever breathed.

In China, you must understand, assassination is a regular, ancient and almost honourable profession. If you want anyone removed, you have only to pay a fee, varying according to the difficulty of the job and the importance of the victim, and the thing is as good as done. Rates range, I am told, from about £5 upwards, and the methods vary from public stabbing or shooting to a judicious dose of powdered glass or tiny bamboo splinters administered privately with your food.

In case you should set this down as an attempt at humorous exaggeration or plain ordinary lying, it might be as well to recall what happened to three well-known men in the great British port of Hong-Kong.

One was a wealthy Chinese business man attached as compradore to a British shipping company. During a seaman's strike he tried to engage non-union labour for a vessel lying idle in port. The Chinese strikers promptly hired an experienced assassin, and he was shot dead—not in a dark alley, but as he rode in his rickshaw at midday through a crowded street.

The second was a sub-contractor of a dock at Kowloon, on the opposite side of Hong-Kong harbour. This fellow, also a Chinese, had somehow made himself unpopular in militant labour circles, and they squared accounts by stabbing him to death in a crowd with a steel file. This, by the way, is a favourite weapon of the really expert assassin. Sharpened to a needle point, it causes little or no bleeding, and leaves no external trace except a small dark triangle.

The third outrage illustrates even better the Chinese penchant for staging these affairs in the limelight. The victim was the best-known actor

in South China. It appears that he had alienated the affections of a concubine belonging to a general at Canton ; and the story goes that that worthy, having " lost face," resolved to re-establish himself in the eyes of the world by taking the only course open to a self-respecting Chinese.

Accordingly, a party of five soldiers journeyed to Hong-Kong, and, to facilitate the killing and subsequent get-away, engaged the entire front row of the stalls. The arrangement was that if one missed the others were to take up the shooting. But their aid was not needed. The leader brought him down at the first shot, and instantly the five gun-men sprang for a side door and vanished into the night.

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## V. " Iron and Blood "

But queer things, fantastic things, are always happening in China. Where else in the world would you find such an advertisement as this, clipped from a Shanghai paper ?

" Yesterday, I received a letter from a Mr. Tsou, of the ' Iron and Blood Society ', asking for a loan of five thousand dollars to be delivered to a person waiting at the South Side of the Fung Ling Bridge. I want to tell you that you have made a mistake. I am not rich. I am an old man, having retired from business twenty years ago, and I recently sold all my property in order to undertake charitable work. I have spent all my money, and have advanced to the age of death. You should make careful inquiries. It is hot. Excuse my not writing any more."

What the sequel was I do not know. One would like to think that the appeal of the aged and over-heated but still courteous philanthropist was not made in vain, that even the hearts of the " Iron and Blood " brethren were just a little touched.

But from what I have learned of Chinese desperados I rather doubt it. They are not, as a rule, very susceptible to pleas of this kind; neither, should you fall into their hands, is it wise to plead utter poverty. The Chinese bandit has only one use for a prisoner, and should you fail him, he has his own way of showing his disappointment. As a final appeal to your better nature he will probably tie you up by your thumbs; and, if you are still inclined to be pigheaded about it, he will proceed to slice off certain pieces which he, perhaps rightly, regards as non-essential, but which you may value rather highly. These he will send along to your relatives and friends, it being well understood, of course, that the receipt of a familiar-looking hand or ear is Chinese for "cheque will oblige."

The genuine, 100 per cent, two-fisted and thoroughly red-blooded desperado usually operates in the more remote districts of China, where he will be saved the trouble of driving off police or troops. That is to say, he ordinarily does not carry on within a radius of three miles from the G.P.O. But footpads, gun-men, and secret blackmailing organizations such as the "Iron and Blood Society," naturally flourish best in great cities like Shanghai, Hong-Kong, and Singapore. There the bad man springeth up like a flower, and is far too infrequently cut down.

For the most part he practises team-work. The Chinese have a mania for secret societies almost as acute as that of the American undergraduate; and in a land where the "squeeze"—or what the Americans call "graft"—is a national institution, it is inevitable that the activities of many of them should take on a sinister form. Outwardly, these organizations are not quite as enterprising as the

Tongs of San Francisco, which long ago became as famous for its Tong wars as it was for its Barbary Coast. But the explanation probably is that the Tongs have a better press agent in America, where most people live for the limelight and die for the publicity.

Anyway, the secret societies of the East are quite energetic in their quiet way. Three men were killed one night in Sago Street, Singapore, while I was in that cesspool of the East ; and the incident was regarded as so commonplace that a bored press reported it in three line paragraphs. The police have tried to suppress the secret societies of Shanghai and the Triad Society of Hong-Kong, whose members are distinguished in the world of crime for the drinking of each other's blood at the initiation ceremony. But the more you try to reform the East the more emphatically it remains the same, and Hong-Kong still stages its extraordinarily daring crimes, and still houses in its underworld some of the most remarkable and desperate criminals who ever breathed outside the pages of fiction.

Not that Hong-Kong has a monopoly of them. As I write, Harbin's evening paper has arrived with the news that the millionaire proprietor of this hotel was kidnapped from his carriage at eight o'clock this morning.

" It seems," records the journal nonchalantly, not having bothered to make close inquiries into such a trifling incident,—" it seems that the bandits conveyed their captive to a house which was surrounded by the police. Severe firing commenced from both sides. About midday the bandits gave in, and the police entered the house. On the floor they found the millionaire Kulayeff,

severely mauled and covered with blood. The bandits had jumped out of the windows."

And that is all Harbin has to say about a sensation which, even in conservative London, would demand photographs of the principals' wives, diagrams in which "X marks position of body," the use of field artillery, and the presence of Mr. Winston Churchill.

IN THE WESTERN HILLS.

THE GREAT WALL.

## CHAPTER X

### "IN XANADU"

Nanking—The Wonderful Yangtsze-Kiang—Desolate Villages —Peking—The Legation Quarter—Historic Buildings.

THE hard glitter of Shanghai had lost a little of its lure, and Peking was calling; and so at dinner-time one evening I told my room boy I was leaving by that night's express. Equal to any emergency, as the resourceful Chinese always is, he had my luggage at the station in half an hour, and returned with a cheerful report that though there was three dollars excess to pay, he had offered what he gracefully described as "a commission" and had the amount reduced to two dollars. Such devotion to my interests obviously deserved a dollar tip; the net result being that instead of paying three dollars to the railway, I paid two to the railway and one to my boy, which was all in accordance with the best Chinese traditions.

But one didn't grudge the smiling little fellow his "squeeze." Being a poor man and economical, he had only one wife, he told me; but he added, with a mingled pride and humility which I found rather touching, that he had several good boys and was having them taught most expensively to read and write so that they might become, not room boys like himself, but "something more higher up."

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## II. On the Blue Express

From Shanghai you may travel to Peking, by the prettily-named Blue Express, in about forty hours. The train is not uncomfortable: it is guarded by troops and has not lately been looted by bandits—possibly, though it seems incredible, because the bandits fear the troops as much as the troops fear the bandits.

It is a long journey, and were it not for Nanking, would be almost featureless. Nanking was once one of China's greatest cities. In recent years it has been one of the Emperors' pleasure-resorts; and you may still see there the lotus lake created to gratify a sovereign's whim. Here, too, you cross the wonderful Yangtsze-Kiang, with its immense trade, thousands of barges, junks and steamers, and the quaint beggars who bob and spin around you in tubs and dangle bags, suspended from the ends of poles, beseechingly beneath your nose as you lean over the rail. Rising amidst the snows of Thibet, 2,900 miles from the sea, the Yangtsze-Kiang is navigable by large steamers to I-chang, a thousand miles from its mouth, is half a mile wide even here at Nanking, and affects the lives of more people than any other river in the world. The Nile brings life to millions; but the combined population of Egypt and the Sudan is almost insignificant beside the 130 millions who dwell in the valleys of the Yangtsze-Kiang. The Mississippi may be the world's longest waterway, the Amazon the most tremendous, the Nile the most historic; but for power over life and death the Yangtsze is supreme.

For the rest, the journey to Peking is as dull as a journey well could be: cultivated fields, not

nearly so rich or so picturesque as those of Java; rolling hills, bare of trees, and, like most of the land in the East, very poorly grassed; and here and there a small town or village—hideous mud-and-thatch hovels dumped down beside some stream or stagnant, fever-haunted marsh. Now and then you see a cow or a bullock, quite possibly yoked with a mule, dragging a primitive plough; and once in a way a farmer, with a load tied fore and aft, astride a tiny donkey.

Very curious, too, are the graves on the hillsides, each with its semicircular wall; and the mounds, dotted everywhere about the fields, under which the humbler dead lie buried. The Chinese priest cannot decide on a burial ground without consulting omens; and in the end his choice usually falls on the most inconvenient spot in the locality—a particularly fertile patch, or the middle of what passes in China for a road. Once buried, the body must on no account be disturbed, and the engineer building a railway or an irrigation channel is faced every few yards with the alternative of outraging Chinese opinion or making a detour.

If he knows the East he does neither. He seeks out a priest, offers the one argument to which no Chinese is impervious, and the holy man consults the omens once more and finds that they require an immediate removal of the bones to some more convenient spot.

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### III. Peking

It was the morning of the third day, after two nights and a day in the Blue Express, and we were nearing Tientsin. The villages became larger,

flitted by more often, and looked even more depressing than those I had seen before. In some —mere huddles of yellowish-grey clay huts on acres of mud and water—men, women and children were wading through slush, knee deep, to the very doors. I saw a number of dwellings which were collapsing, or had already fallen, owing to the washing away of the clay walls by the recent floods. And near Tientsin there was a large village, or small town, that was a sore upon the earth's fair face ; a square mile of clay kennels with the grass growing thickly from the roofs, great holes gaping in the walls, a bog to the door (and, for all I know, inside), coolies staring at you with seamed faces and dull, sunken eyes, little toddlers, naked but for a coating of mud, playing in the filth, and a few youngsters with long sticks trying to catch the butterflies hovering over a stagnant pool.

Tientsin—one of the largest cities in China, with a thriving trade, foreign garrisons, some gaiety, and despite it all, rather uninteresting—came and went ; and at three o'clock the same afternoon I found myself gazing from the roof-garden of my hotel across the roof-tops of old Peking.

I saw a vast expanse of grey, broken by splotches of dark green, stretching away to the great encircling wall. The houses, excepting a few hotels and offices built within the last decade or so, are uniformly grey and dingy, and seldom go higher than one story. One of the Emperors, I was told, did not like the idea of any of his subjects living in a dwelling from which he could look down upon the Palace, and so, with a happy blend of loyalty and prudence, good citizens saw to it

that their buildings went so high and no higher.

Peking is divided into two—the inner, or Tartar City, and the outer, or Chinese City. Actually, the terms "inner" and "outer" are misleading, for the so-called inner city is not within the outer, but lies near its northern wall. Around both, and enclosing an area of 25 square miles, runs a gigantic wall, 30 miles in circumference. The Tartar wall is 50 feet high, 60 feet wide at the base, and 40 feet wide at the top. The section around the Chinese City, built in 1543, is rather smaller—30 feet high, 25 feet wide at the base, and 15 feet wide at the top. Every 60 yards there is a buttress, and above each of the sixteen gates is a high tower, with countless loopholes through which the archers inside used to harry an attacking force.

Inside the Tartar City is the Kwang Ch'êng, or Imperial City; and within that again lies the Forbidden City, in which stands the Emperor's Palace. A little to the northward rises a great artificial mound, called Prospect Hill, 150 feet high, with five peaks, each capped by a temple. Near by are the Drum Tower and the wonderful Bell Tower, with its colossal bell whose deep, rich note, audible all over the city, used to sound at the changing of the night watches and as a warning of sudden peril. And all around are plantations of trees, on one of which the last of the Ming Emperors hanged himself in 1644.

It is all bald enough in the telling, but rather wonderful to see. There is a barbaric splendour about the lofty throne room of the Palace, with its great columns soaring to the painted roof. In the museum at the Palace there is a bewildering array of pottery, china, silks, tapestries and

jewels, exquisitely wrought and rarely beautiful. And there is something about the Temple of Heaven, with its blue pillars, triple roof, three circular terraces and marble balustrades, that seems to conjure up figures of the past : solemn priests, emperors long since dead, and courtiers who kow-towed and dropped their eyes rather than gaze sacrilegiously upon the devotions of the Sons of Heaven.

To the Temple of Heaven, which every good Chinese believes to be the exact centre of the earth, the very heart of the Middle Kingdom, the Emperors came on the 21st day of each December to offer prayers to the Deity who controlled drought and famine. Whether their piety was always adequately rewarded is rather doubtful ; but the Chinese were always a patient people and long-suffering.

Then there are the playgrounds in the Western Hills—the Summer Palace, with its lake and pagodas on the hill above, and the Jade Fountain, and I forget what else besides. To see them, you drive about 25 miles from the city through hilly country where peasants live in tumble-down stone huts, and win a wretched living from the rocky soil. The authorities have recently built some sort of road—one of the few roads in China—which the guide-book describes as " a magnificent macadamized highway." I have ridden in bullock drays and sledges in Tasmania, and bumped in narrow, rickety droshkies, helter-skelter, over the cobbles of Harbin and the unpaved streets of Siberian towns ; but never have I seen anything which so closely resembled the bed of a mountain torrent. But perhaps I am biassed by my painful recollections of a springless Ford, and of a terrific

thunderstorm which soaked through the hood, beat in at the side, and leaked through cracks until, with muttered curses, we gave up trying to keep dry and bade the Chinese chauffeur—poor, soaking devil!—drive on.

Peking is not a beautiful city, nor, in the ordinary sense, a gay one. The streets are quiet thoroughfares, undisturbed by trams—though I saw gangs of men laying rails; the shops, full of the most astonishing bargains in silks, copper, and cloisonné ware, are small, one-story places which trade as they did a thousand years ago; and when you set out to call on a friend you need not be surprised, or fear that your throat will be cut, if your rickshaw boy takes you up a dark and narrow *hutung*, and sets you down at a door in an otherwise blank brick wall. For most of the foreigners in Peking live in Chinese houses which have been converted and furnished in European style; and very comfortable and attractive many of them are—always provided, of course, that it doesn't rain too heavily. When I reached Peking it had been raining steadily for ten days, and the rain continued to fall day after day in a grey sheet. At the end of a week people were asking, "Does your house leak?" At the end of a fortnight it was, "How lucky you are to have a dry place for your bed." Rickshaw boys, laughing like schoolboys, were splashing delightedly through a foot of water, the vehicles were bumping over hidden rocks and gutters, and at any moment, as I discovered at the corner of a little lane that leads from Morrison Street to the telegraph office, you were liable to capsize and measure your length in the yellow flood. And if there is one time more than another when

it is not easy to preserve your dignity and uphold the white man's prestige in the East, it is the painful moment when you are picking yourself out of a muddy torrent and trying to climb nonchalantly back into your rickshaw.

Peking is credited, on rather doubtful evidence, with over one million inhabitants. The white population is very small, and outside the Legation Quarter there is little to indicate their existence beyond two good hotels and a few shady places where, if your tastes run that way, you may drink bad wine and dance with a score or so of Russian women who should be flattered if one described their character as doubtful.

But stroll down the Rue Marco Polo, with its high brick wall on either side, and you find yourself in a different world. Here, in the Legation Quarter, are groves of shady trees, green lawns, flowers and solid European houses, with creepers winding about the walls. These are the homes of the diplomats and their staffs. In this special area, defended by guards and enclosed by a loopholed brick wall, the representatives of the leading Powers have lived ever since the Boxer Rebellion and the siege of the Legations in the summer of 1900.

The only Treaty Power not represented in the Quarter when I was in Peking was Soviet Russia, which had special offices elsewhere. M. Karakhan, however, was demanding the key to the premises occupied by the survivors of the old régime, and is now not only in possession but, as the only Ambassador in Peking—the others are merely Ministers—is technically doyen of the Diplomatic Corps.

* * * * *

If I had to live in one of the cities of the East I should have no hesitation in choosing Peking. The Europeans are nearly all of the best type, the hospitality of the place is delightful, and, while there is little in the way of popular amusements, the season, if one cares for these things, is one long round of dinners, receptions and balls. Then, too, there is dancing every night at the splendid Hôtel de Pékin, and the Peking Club is just what a club should be.

Above all, the place has that rare and indefinable quality—atmosphere. Relics of the past are all about you, the wall on which you strike your match, the very dust beneath your feet, are impregnated with the germs of history. Hong-Kong is new and stolidly bourgeois, and Shanghai is rich and glittering ; but Peking has the serenity and dignity of age, an air of aloof indifference to the changes that the centuries have brought elsewhere. Other places (it seems to be saying) may have their little hour, their tawdry triumphs ; but this is the home of Emperors ; here history has been and always will be made. Genghis Khan rode in triumph through this same street where your rickshaw rolls to-day. It was here that Kubla Khan, who ruled a domain that stretched to the Black Sea and Poland, did

> "A stately pleasure-dome decree,
> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran,
> Through caverns measureless to man,
> Down to a sunless sea,"

though I fear the "deep romantic chasm" and "green hill" are but the embroiderings of a poet. Marco Polo dwelt here for twenty-five years and lived to see his home in Venice and be received

with the respectful admiration due to one who had walked with kings and seen the wonders of Cathay. These streets have echoed to the tramp of armies going forth to battle. Wild pig-tailed men from Manchurian wastes, Mongols from the north-west, Tartars from the Gobi Desert and beyond, have beaten against the city's defences, and more than once stormed this very wall that looms above you. These quiet backwaters have seen the massacre of the conquered, the sacking of a city.

But all this was long ago. The pageantry and the storms have passed, and left little trace ; and to-day the calling of the rooks at daybreak and the persistent cries of the hawker, with their plaintive modulation suggestive of a Swiss yodel, emphasize rather than disturb its ancient peace.

Still, Peking, in its quiet, unhurried way, goes on making history. For a hundred years the eagles of the nations have been gathering to pluck the tit-bits from China's carcase, and what with the conflict of interests between the Great Powers, the scheming of the Soviet Government and the Japanese over Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway, and the growth of Chinese nationalism under the stimulus of Red propaganda, Peking has become a hot-bed of intrigue and, as I was told by Sun Yat-sen, one of the potential storm-centres of the world.

# CHAPTER XI

## OF A NUMBER OF THINGS

Politics in Peking—Rivalry between Yen and Koo—The Art of the "Squeeze"—President and Princess as Practitioners—Difficulties in the Way of Reform—A Deal with Fat Ham.

PEKING, when I arrived, was in the midst of a political crisis. Dr. W. W. Yen, as Premier designate, and Dr. Wellington Koo, as acting Premier, were engaged in a prolonged battle for the Premiership—and by battle I mean the endless round of receptions, dinners, tea-parties and cajolings without which no Chinese political crisis can be settled.

My own sympathies were all with Yen, and even though his Ministry was destined very soon to be overthrown by the Civil War, I was quite delighted when the news filtered through to me—I fancy I was in Chita at the time—that he had eventually dined and teaed his way to victory. Koo is a master of tactics, and exceptionally well qualified for any contest of wits, diplomacy and intrigue—more especially intrigue; but Yen, though he may not be a Bismarck or a Cavour, is obviously built on a broader gauge and has by far the more impressive and more likeable personality.

About 5 feet 9 inches in height, Dr. Yen is bigger, burlier and more athletic-looking than most of his race. He cultivates a small black moustache, wears horn-rimmed glasses, and, when I visited his home,

was wearing white trousers, a blue blazer and a bow tie. His manners are charming, and, unlike most Chinese—doubtless because he was educated in America and was for some time Ambassador in Berlin—he talks as directly as any European. Very frankly he spoke of China's troubles and his own embarrassments ; and he explained with some humour the peculiarities of China's politics.

" The present parliament has already been sitting twelve years, and will go on until the country is orderly enough for another election," he told me. " We have no platforms, no policies—nothing approaching a party system as you know it. This question of the Premiership, for instance, will not be decided by political factors. Members vote one way or the other according to whether they like or dislike you or your family or your friends."

He might have added, but discreetly didn't, that in China there is also a close connection between friendliness and finance.

I asked Dr. Yen had China really changed at heart since the overthrow of the Empire in 1911.

" Yes," he said, " monarchical ideas are dying or dead, and the Republic is firmly established. The change was really not as violent as an outsider might suppose, for even under the Empire China was an essentially democratic country. Here, as in America, the lowest may attain to the highest positions, even to the Presidency itself."

It all sounded very satisfactory to a democrat's ears ; but on going further into the subject I learned that over 90 per cent of the people are barred from the franchise, and from all prospect of advancement, by their inability to read and write.

" The country's two great needs," Dr. Yen continued, " are communications and industries. The

Chinese are a peace-loving people. They don't want to become bandits and pirates. Neither do they want to wear a uniform and stand around all day for a few dollars a month. But they have to make a living somehow. People ask us why a country at peace should have a million men under arms. But what can we do? We can't turn a million men loose to swell the ranks of the bandits or the unemployed. And so I repeat that the whole thing hinges on industry. Give us new workshops and new industries, and railways to carry goods to market, and the worst of our problems will be solved."

He agreed with Marshal Wu Pei-fu that it would be much better for China if Britain's share of the Boxer Indemnity were spent on railways instead of education. If the £11,000,000 were devoted to railway construction, he pointed out, China would have an invaluable asset, and the profits could be used to endow education for all time.

I cannot think of a politician of any race or colour whom at first sight I liked better than Dr. Yen; and I said good-bye to him—such is the man's charm of manner—with the feeling that I was leaving a friend.

A very different type, both mentally and physically, is Dr. Wellington Koo. He is short, very slender, sleek-haired, clean-shaven and so babyishly smooth of face that your first impression is one of extreme youth. But study him more carefully and you soon perceive that though Dr. Koo really is quite young—he is about thirty-five—he is old in caution, judgment, tact, and all else that goes to make a diplomat. Like Dr. Yen, he talks perfect English without the slightest accent; but there the resemblance ends. For whereas Dr. Yen is

easy, informal, and full of humour, Dr. Koo, like many little men, takes life and himself very seriously. He is very courteous and pleasant, of course; all cultured Chinese are that. But whereas Dr. Yen talks to you, Dr. Koo very graciously grants you an audience.

In intellect he is, I should think, at least the equal of his rival. I heard him subjected to a fire of questions about all manner of delicate subjects on which he did not want to commit himself, and it was quite entertaining to watch the agility with which he side-stepped every attack. Suave, inscrutable, and entirely impassive save for a little trick of blinking his eyes, he would listen attentively, pause a second, and then give a smooth reply revealing nothing that every one did not know before. Dr. Koo is a master of the art of saying nothing with dignity and weight.

And he has another asset which is useful in any land, and invaluable in China. Thanks to his marriage, he is enormously wealthy; and though he is now in eclipse, there is no knowing when he will blossom into greatness after the fashion of Tsao-Kun.

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## II. The "Squeeze"

This intrusion of money into the realm of Government is the curse of Chinese public life. The foreigner finds no official who is above suspicion, no transaction that is untainted. "In all the four hundred millions of China," he cries in exasperation and despair, "is there not one honest man?"

If he consults friends who know China and its ways, he finds that ninety per cent. say "No." There are Chinese who, judged by any standard,

are cultured gentlemen ; the majority are honourable, according to their own lights, and have a respect for their word which is rare amongst whites ; and some are hospitable and kind. But of honesty, as we understand it, the average Chinese has not the faintest conception, just as he has no notion of what other races mean by patriotism.

By this I do not mean that he will steal your purse, or anything like that. In that respect he is probably above reproach. What I do mean is that the whole nation is corrupted by what the Americans call " graft," and is obsessed, to a degree unparalleled elsewhere, with a passion for getting rich quickly. The more decent Chinese will not rob you outright, because to do so would be to sully his honour. But the commercial and public morality of the people is so rotten that the same man sees nothing wrong in robbing the Government, or a company, or even his employer, provided that he can do it in the way prescribed and hallowed by ancient custom. This way he finds in what is very appropriately called " the squeeze."

The squeeze is a practice that takes many forms and extends from the highest citizen in China to the humblest coolie. It is notorious that Tsao-Kun, who has just resigned from the Presidency, bought his office for a sum variously stated at from £100,000 to £300,000 ; and it is doing that worthy no injustice to suggest that by the time he fell he had recovered most of the outlay and was looking forward to making a handsome profit on his investment. For a high official's opportunities to squeeze, in a country where auditing is a farce, are almost limitless. Various public moneys pass through every President's hands, and are liable to stick in the process ; and when he helps to smooth

the path of some candidate for public office he would not be a Chinese if he did not expect something else besides gratitude in return.

The same thing applies to every other grade of public servant. When there was a move not long ago to shorten the term of provincial Governors from three years to two, it was opposed on the ground that as no one could expect to be a Governor without spending freely in acquiring the office, it was only fair to give him a reasonable chance to get his money back and make a profit.

And the whole of China's civil and military administration seems to be based upon this same principle. In China you can hardly expect to get an important post for nothing ; but, when you do get it, you can levy tribute in turn upon every applicant for the minor posts in your bestowal, and in addition appropriate a reasonable proportion of the public revenues passing through your hands—say 50 per cent. You may even take more ; but there is always the risk that if you cut too deeply into the plunder of the man higher up you may pay for your greed with your head.

This elementary but important truth was recently brought home to the Governor of Mongolia, who, agreeing with Oscar Wilde that nothing succeeds like excess, got away (at a conservative estimate) with £120,000, and was adjudged to have committed one of those blunders which are infinitely worse than crimes. Ordinarily, however, there is not the slightest risk, for the well-trained Chinese official, reared in the best traditions of the State's service, knows just how far he can rob without becoming dishonest.

How the system works may be judged from a story which has often been told and may be true.

STONE ANIMALS GUARDING A CHINESE NOBLEMAN'S GRAVE.

IN THE NANKOW PASS NORTH OF PEKIN.

Some one had suggested to the Emperor that the streets of Peking should be lighted. He agreed.

"Here is 100,000 dollars to light the streets," he told his Prime Minister.

That dignitary summoned the next man.

"Here," he announced, "is 50,000 dollars to light the streets."

The second man sent for the official responsible for the administration of the city and passed on the instructions. "Here is 25,000 dollars to light the streets," he said.

And the city administrator issued a proclamation that every householder must place a lamp outside his house or lose his head. Thus was Peking lighted.

Remember this story and you will have no difficulty in understanding why, at a modest estimate, nine-tenths of the taxes levied in China never reached Peking and why half of what does reach Peking is either misappropriated or thrown away on place men. (Amongst other quaint entries in the last Budget was 13,984 dollars a month for the completion of the history of the Ch'eng Dynasty, 2,363 dollars for the Commissioner for the Chastisement of Civil Offenders, and 1,973 dollars for the Commissioner for the Chastisement of Judicial Offenders). It also explains why the Treasury of one of the largest and richest countries of the world is always empty, why there is never adequate provision for famine relief, and why China cannot afford to undertake developmental work without bringing in outside capital.

To us it is a sordid and rather sickening business, but the difficulties in the way of reform are tremendous. Every foreigner who enters China's service soon recognizes the impossibility of changing a

system in which each member of a vast army of public servants has a vested interest ; and either he resigns in disgust, or he cultivates philosophic indifference and a sense of humour, or he enters the squeeze game himself.

This instinct to levy tribute upon all public moneys as a matter of right, and to capitalize every situation, seems to be deep-rooted in every Chinese from the highest to the lowest.

" What am I going to get out of it ? " asked a certain princess not long ago, when a foreigner begged her to procure him an invitation to an important ceremony.

He asked her what she wanted, and the lady told him that a wristlet watch would do quite nicely. He promised that the watch would be hers, and the invitation duly arrived. She saw nothing peculiar in the transaction. She was in a position to do something for him : why shouldn't she benefit by it ?

Your coolie servant, not being in a position to dictate terms, has to work more subtly, and it is with him that the squeeze reaches perfection. He has so many devices for fleecing you, and is so infinitely resourceful in applying them, that no matter what precautions you take, he always seems to keep at least one move ahead. Your cook, for instance, will sign for 50 per cent. more food than he actually receives, and divide the profit with the butcher and the grocer. If you check the food yourself when it arrives, he will send some back later and tell you that it has been used. Or if your watch is too strict for either stratagem, he will allow the flies to get at the food, or put it in the sun to spoil, or do something else to ensure that the monthly bill is swollen to its utmost. In return

for all this, he receives a secret commission and quite possibly a share of the profits—for it need not surprise you to learn that the humble boy to whom you pay seven-and-six a week is really a partner of the butcher or the baker or the grocer.

Your chauffeur works on much the same plan. He signs for more petrol and oil than he actually receives, surreptitiously pumps a gallon or two out of the tank now and then, changes a good tyre for an indifferent one, sees that there is a fairly costly repair job at intervals, and in various other ways contrives to play into the hands of the garage people, and incidentally to enrich himself.

It is no use trying to get rid of this nuisance by driving yourself. If you do, the Chauffeurs' Guild will look into your case and the first time you leave your car unguarded you will probably find a tyre slashed or a part stolen. Nor is it any use trying to eliminate the squeeze in its other manifestations. The average European is not long in China before he recognizes the folly of a single-handed struggle against a national institution, and, providing that he is not too outrageously victimized, philosophically accepts the squeeze as part of the natural order of things—as in China it really is.

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### III. Buying a Curio

It is possible to pick up some wonderful bargains in the East. In a narrow street in Canton, at a shop with a door heavily barred against the robbers and soldiers who roamed the city, I bought a shawl, the envy of all who have seen it, for a price that was simply ridiculous. And in Peking—but perhaps I may tell you the story.

I dodged a furiously-driven Ford, in which two

Chinese in uniform lolled back with insufferable self-satisfaction, stepped on to the narrow wooden pavement in time to avoid a rickshaw boy who mopped at his dripping face as he ran ; and there, in a little shop above which was the legend, " FAT HAM, Genuine Antiques," I saw the very thing I wanted—a damascene cigarette case of fantastic design and exquisite workmanship. Across a black background writhed a monster of the sort we see in the evil dreams of chilhood—a great gold dragon that wound and twisted until his shining coils covered almost the whole lid. And yet (so beautifully was it worked) the whole thing was magnificent without being garish, " rich but not gaudy." It might once have been the plaything of an Emperor—or, at the very least, a Mandarin.

At the doorway I hesitated. What was it I had been told ? " There are so many fakes, and with damascene ware especially it is hard to tell whether the gold is real or merely washed on, unless you're up to the dealer's little tricks. How are you to tell the difference ? Well, if it is real, the gold remains golden ; and if it isn't real it soon turns a horrible rusty brown and you bury it in a secret place without saying anything to anybody."

H'm. Very sensible advice, no doubt. But, after all, I told myself, gold is tolerably familiar—or it was in the days of real money ; and the fact that one is not an expert doesn't prove that one is entirely devoid of taste. . . .

" You like good curio ? " said an insinuating voice ; and as I gazed upon the smooth, blandly smiling, childishly innocent face of Fat Ham, the dealer in genuine antiques, my last doubt disappeared.

" How much this ? " I asked, pointing to a Can-

tonese shawl which I had no intention of buying. (A subtle move, this, to throw the dealer off the scent and prevent him profiting by my eagerness to acquire the cigarette case. After all, the Chinese isn't the only strategist in the world. . . .)

"One hundred twenty-five dollars. Velly cheap."

"Nonsense. You can buy them in Canton for half. No, I don't want to see it. And what is this?"—"this" being a rather fine cloisonné bowl.

"Twenty dollars. Velly good. You know good things, mastah."

I didn't bother to contradict him. Besides, secretly I had the same idea myself. Who hasn't?

"Well, it's too dear. I don't think I'll buy anything to-day." And then, with elaborate carelessness, "Oh, by the way, how much is that cigarette-case?"

"Ah, you like *velly* good things. Ciglette case, velly old, more better than any other curio I have. Me think you buy curio many times before."

Obvious flattery, of course. He must think I was a fool to be taken in like that. Still, there might be something in what he said. Dash it all, an ounce of taste is worth a ton of experience, and——

"It marked thirty-five dollar, mastah. Me sell it to you for twenty-nine."

"Twenty-nine dollars! For that! Why it's not worth fifteen . . . I'll give you twenty."

"Twenty, mastah?" He seemed surprised and a little pained. "No can do. Me lose much money. That velly old and good and more better——"

"Yes, yes, I know all about that. I will give you twenty-two dollars."

But again he shook his head. " Me poor man, mastah. Buy curio for twenty-four dollar and sell for twenty-two dollar ? No can do."

The thing sounded only reasonable, but still I had my doubts. To test them I turned to go, fully expecting that he would immediately call me back. But he made no sign. Obviously the thing must be worth more, so at the door I turned.

" Look, I'll give you twenty-five."

A broad smile illumined Fat Ham's honest round face.

" Twenty-seven, mastah."

" No, twenty-five."

" Me toss you, twenty-five or twenty-seven," suggested Fat Ham, with the readiness of the Chinese to gamble on anything from a fight between crickets—a favourite pastime amongst schoolboys—to the precise hour of his grandmother's death.

He spun a coin, examined it as it lay, and handed me the cigarette case.

" You velly clever. Buy curio many times before. I make only one dollar. And velly good and old . . ."

His voice died away in a regretful murmur which strengthened my conviction that even if other people were sometimes swindled it is possible for anyone with a little taste and shrewdness to pick up a genuine bargain. " Velly clever . . ." Well, perhaps there really was something in what the fellow said.

* * * * *

This was a fortnight ago, and the cigarette case that would cause a little flutter in a far-off land— " I'm sure it's frightfully old, my dear ; shouldn't

be surprised if it belongs to the Ming period, you know," I could hear some one saying—was still lying at the bottom of the suit-case. Quite time it was posted if it is to be there in time for her birthday. Oh, well, better do it now.

I fished up the little case in which the treasure reposed, found some wrapping paper and string, and was about to tie it up when pride overcame me and suggested a last fond look. Reverently I lifted the lid, unfolded the tissue paper, and——

Good heavens! The thing had turned brown.

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# CHAPTER XII

## FROM BANDIT TO MARSHAL

Mukden—A Boom Town—I Set Out to See Chang Tso-lin—And Encounter Difficulties—The Terrible Marshal—His Views on the Superman—Napoleon, Foch, Northcliffe and some Others—I Ride with the "Young Marshal."

ONE of the most serious problems confronting the Peking Government just at this time was the attitude of Marshal Chang Tso-lin, the War Lord of Mukden. Twice within the last few years his feud with Wu Pei-fu, the Peking Marshal, had led to an inconclusive war ; and now both leaders were preparing for yet another appeal to arms—Wu Pei-fu at Loyang, in the South, and Chang Tso-lin at Mukden, the capital of his virtually independent republic of Manchuria. I say "virtually independent" because Chang had disregarded the decrees of Peking, carried on negotiations with the Soviet Government and with Japan, and been accorded the recognition due to a *de facto* sovereign.

He was clearly a remarkable figure, this crafty, subtle Manchu who began as a brigand and now overshadowed the 400 million people of China—so remarkable that I had no intention of leaving China for Russia without seeing him. I said as much to some friends in Peking.

Gently and patiently they explained that in China things were not done with this informality and indecent haste. An interview with any Chinese Marshal required due preparation. As for

Chang Tso-lin . . . well, they did not want to discourage me, of course, but before I made the 500-mile journey to Mukden I really ought to know the difficulties. First of all, I gathered, Chang Tso-lin not only ruled the great province of Manchuria with the undisputed authority of an emperor, but maintained something of an emperor's state. Secondly, he was rather unapproachable and did not court publicity. And thirdly, he lived in constant fear of assassination and took infinite precautions before admitting strangers to his presence. I was told that he had even gone to the length of having a motor-car specially built for him in America at a cost of £6,000. This vehicle he had had decorated with gold and covered with bullet-proof armour, thereby insuring that if he did suffer on the road it would be from the usual mechanical causes.

All this merely strengthened my resolve to see the great Manchu leader. I obtained a letter of introduction, written in the most flowery Chinese characters—for the Marshal knows no English—and forwarded it to one of his ministers; and on arrival at Mukden I enlisted the additional aid of the acting Consul-General for Great Britain, Mr. Porter, and Mr. Carleton E. Baker, the able American who has acted for some years as Chang's foreigner adviser. These gentlemen obligingly testified to the mildness of my disposition and my complete freedom from homicidal tendencies—at all events, during the few hours they had known me; and thanks to their influence I duly received an invitation to call at the great man's yamen, or residence, at three o'clock on the following day.

This satisfactorily arranged, I set out to see the city. Thirty years ago Mukden was a dirty pro-

vincial town of the sort you find everywhere in China, set down in the midst of a desolate plain. Then came the railway, and Mukden began to boom. A flourishing trade in grain and beans sprang up, and the town, lying as it did on the line which ran south from the Trans-Siberian to the great naval base of Port Arthur, and at the junction with the line running south-east through Korea, became the key to southern Manchuria and Korea. It was not by accident, therefore, that Mukden was the scene of the decisive battle of the Russo-Japanese War.

Since the Japanese acquired, by right of conquest, Russia's rights in the South Manchurian railway, and established law and order in the railway zone, Mukden has continued to grow like one of the mushroom cities of Western America. To-day it has a population variously estimated at from 300,000 to 500,000, and under the joint rule of Chang Tso-lin and the Japanese, who forced China by the indefensible Twenty-One Demands to prolong their occupation of the railway, is rapidly becoming one of the greatest and most important cities in China.

But it is not an entertaining place. Outside the railway zone the streets are mostly crude and unpaved ; the temperature ranges from fierce heat to 40° or 50° of frost ; as in most other cities in China, there is no sewage system outside one or two hotels; and the telephone system is not improved by the existence of rival Chinese and Japanese exchanges. But remember that a generation ago Mukden consisted mainly of Chinese hovels, and you marvel, not that the place is still raw, but that it has achieved so much.

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## II. The Terrible Marshal

At 2.30 next day I set out in a rickshaw behind a boy who assured the hotel commissionaire that he knew quite well where to go ; and at three o'clock, hot, dusty but punctual, I stepped through a gate in a high brick wall and presented my card to the keeper of the door with the intimation that I was calling on His Excellency Marshal Chang Tso-lin, and I added, ponderously, " by appointment."

The official politely bowed me to a chair, and I sat down to await the great man's summons. Ten minutes went by and nothing happened ; twenty minutes, and I began to grow anxious for my appointment ; half an hour and I realized that something had gone seriously wrong. Once more I tried to explain to the suave Chinese, who (as I now discovered) did not understand a word of English, that I had an appointment, and a confoundedly important appointment too, with Marshal Chang Tso-lin ; and to make the thing quite clear I drew a diagram of a clock and pointed to the three. Whereupon the Chinese, evidently surmising that he had to do with an artist or a lunatic, surveyed my handiwork from three different angles, smiled his admiration, but still did nothing.

It occurred to me that Mark Twain's dictum about foreigners spelling better than they pronounce might have special application to China, and I began rapidly ejaculating the Marshal's name with every possible accent, intonation and pronunciation from Chang (English style) to Jhong, which was as near as I could get to the Chinese. But still the white-robed officials went on gazing at me with the same expression on their yellow faces

—a maddening blend of indifference and thinly disguised mirth.

Suddenly the door was thrown open and a Chinese rushed in. He had all the signs of a man with a purpose, and I wasn't disappointed. He announced that the Marshal had been waiting for me at his yamen (the place where we were at this present turned out to be the Foreign Office) for the best part of an hour, cursed the officials for fools and sons of fools, hustled me into a rickshaw, urged the boys on with shouts and abuse, and altogether gave the best imitation of what the Americans call a go-getter that I had seen in all China. Five minutes later I hurried up the path to the Marshal's big red-brick yamen, was welcomed in the hall by an interpreter, and was conducted to the reception room with an assurance that the Marshal would join me in one moment.

Some minutes went by, and I had time to examine the two enormous stuffed Mongolian tigers—placed there, so the irreverent say, to create the right atmosphere of ferocity. And then I fell to wondering what manner of man was this Chang Tso-lin whose name was in everybody's mouth.

I had heard much to whet my curiosity. Thirty years ago, I had been told, he was the brilliant and daring young leader of a bandit force, some 2,000 strong, whom the Chinese called Hunghutzes, or Redbeards, and feared almost as much as the peaceful Persians once feared that brigand chief who gained sinister and enduring fame as "the Old Man of the Mountains." I knew also that Chang and his followers, after linking up with the Russians in the war of 1904–5, astutely went over to the Japanese and did good work as scouts; that after the war, with an experienced and well-armed

force behind him, he found it easier than ever to defy any Chinese troops sent against him ; and that eventually the Government, following the traditional Chinese method of eliminating bandits, invited him to join the regular army. This offer he accepted, and to-day the bandit chief is not only a Marshal—for that does not necessarily mean much in a country with 308 Marshals on its Army List, including the dead ones whose names no one has bothered to remove—but is dictator of the great state of Manchuria and the most powerful man in China.

Not long ago an American newspaper published another version of Chang Tso-lin's career which has been very widely accepted even in China. This story has it that when the Chinese Government offered to take Chang into the regular army he suspected treachery and was hesitating to accept, when his nephew had an inspiration.

"Say, uncle," he said—or words to that effect—"you've made your pile. You retire on what you've made, and I will take your name, enlist as Chang Tso-lin and risk losing my head."

This sporting offer, according to the American, was accepted, and the man who now rules at Mukden is really the nephew of the original Redbeard leader.

It is a good story, and one doesn't like to spoil it. But the fact remains that I found several Europeans in Mukden who have known the Marshal for twenty years and are prepared to swear that he is the original and only genuine Chang.

Suddenly the interpreter sprang to his feet, and I rose to greet the Chang Tso-lin that I had pictured —a picturesque, swaggering swashbuckler with a

fierce moustache, glittering uniform and a trailing sword that clanked with every step.

Instead I saw a tiny man with sloping shoulders, tired eyes half veiled by drooping lids, dispirited moustaches, a parchment-like skin which seemed to have been drawn too tight, and hair cut so short that at first glance I thought his egg-like head was shaven. I estimated his height at five feet and his weight at about seven stone. He wore a long blue Chinese civilian gown—the correct costume, I learned later, for ceremonies of this kind—and he looked altogether so unmilitary, so mild and so fragile that I should have put him down as some sort of minor secretary.

But the profound bowing of the interpreter convinced me that this must indeed be the terrible marshal—the merciless, tigerishly ferocious man of blood and iron who had been known to shoot down a guilty or erring official with his own hand.

The Marshal waved me to a chair, seated himself on an enormous divan, and with a cigarette-holder fully eighteen inches long between his beautiful tapering fingers, leaned back with half-closed eyes and answered questions in a small, soft voice.

I began by asking him what was the relation of Manchuria to China proper—the question that had been disturbing Peking for two or three years and must very soon be answered.

"One of absolute independence," he replied. "I have come to this decision reluctantly, for he who fights amongst his brothers and sisters is no hero. But a cleavage has been rendered inevitable by the chaotic condition of China. Should China recover I shall obey the President, but in the meanwhile Manchuria, peaceful and prosperous, cannot

afford to throw in her lot with the unfortunate provinces of the south."

"Why don't you establish a permanently independent republic with yourself as president?"

He smiled, evidently well pleased at the suggestion.

"I have no ambitions that way," he assured me. "It may come to that, but I think that China will soon recover."

"But how?" I asked.

Once more the Marshal smiled his gentle reflective smile.

"As in past crises, a great hero will arise and save his country."

He did not definitely say whom he had cast for the rôle; but it was not difficult to arrive at the result by the simple process of elimination. For obviously he had no great opinion of his contemporaries.

"Sun Yat-sen," he told me, "is a bold thinker and a man of high ideals, but he has no constructive ability and none of the other qualities of a man of action."

And he was even more contemptuous in his summing up of Dr. W. W. Yen, then favourite for the Premiership, and Dr. Wellington Koo, the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

"Yen and Koo," he repeated thoughtfully, as he blew a cloud of smoke and sipped his third glass of tea. "Yen and Koo are merely politicians."

It sounded a little Olympian, perhaps, but it is not hard to understand his superiority when one realizes how unimportant the Chinese politician really is. He may be astute and cultured, like Koo, and wholly likeable as well, like Yen. But in a country where constitutional government is the

hollowest of shams he cannot get things done, and in most cases, being a Chinese, would not if he could. Two things count and two only—money and force. If the gods of China have nothing else in common they are unanimous in siding with the big battalions.

Having eliminated all his contemporaries except his great rival Wu Pei-fu, whose name I thought it tactful not to mention, Chang Tso-lin repeated his conviction that China could only be saved by some great national hero. He added, after a long pause, that though his only ambition for the present was to see Manchuria peaceful and well-governed, he would be ready to respond to the people's call.

I tried to find out a little more definitely how, in his opinion, China was to be lifted up from the horrible mess into which she had fallen.

" China is the China of every Chinese," replied the Marshal, whose style follows the best Chinese traditions in that it tends towards the oracular rather than the informative. " The people are a democratic people and they will work out their own salvation. And it will come, I think, fairly soon. I expect that as a result of floods, bad seasons and misgovernment, there will be serious disturbances this year, and that the end of it all will be a struggle which will give some great leader a chance to save his country from the chaos and anarchy which now threaten the whole land with ruin. At least I pray that it be so, for it would be a calamity for the whole world if China became ' Red.' "

We talked on for another half-hour about all manner of things, from the prospects of Bolshevism in China (a subject on which the Marshal was non-committal) to the international difficulties caused by the depreciation of the rouble (a matter on

A STREET IN MUKDEN.

[*Exclusive News Agency.*

which he feels rather deeply) and the strategy of great military leaders, past and present. He was luke-warm in his admiration of Napoleon, but was good enough to think fairly highly of Foch. His own tactics, he added, were an adaptation of Western methods combined with those of a Chinese general (I forget his name) who flourished in some epoch which I cannot remember. This worthy, it seemed, was a military genius of the first order; and his tactics were astonishingly like Chang's.

I recollected that Northcliffe, in the course of that last remarkable tour of his, had done Chang the honour of calling, or had enjoyed the privilege of being received, according to whether you look at that impact of egotisms from the standpoint of Mukden or Carmelite House: and I had a vague idea that Northcliffe had subsequently said something amiable about the Marshal.

"I believe that you were interviewed by Lord Northcliffe," I said. "What did you think of him?"

The Marshal's face relaxed into a complacent smile of reminiscence which was immediately reflected on the pale yellow mirror of the interpreter.

"The Marshal says that Northcliffe was a verree good man."

Somehow I had thought he would be.

We consumed several more glasses of tea—all, of course, without milk or sugar. (Heavens! how it haunts me still!) We exchanged elaborate compliments and expressions of goodwill in the style of a mid-Victorian leading article. I bowed to the Marshal, the Marshal bowed to me and the interpreter bowed to both of us singly and comprehen-

sively. And then I took my leave, only to be checked in the hall by the Marshal's farewell message.

" The Marshal wishes me to say," remarked the interpreter, " that he has had toothache for some days and is not looking at his best. He is really a verree great man."

I replied that this was obvious, and departed.

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### III. The Young Marshal Explains

Next, at the request of the interpreter—a pleasant young fellow who had learned English at the University of Columbia and naïvely wondered how I found out that he had been in America—I called upon the Marshal's son, a warrior, so he assured me, of amazing ferocity and unbelievable valour. I had just consumed six glasses of unsweetened tea in the course of my hour and a half with the Marshal, and the prospect of duplicating the performance was enough to make even an Australian shudder. But the interpreter, obviously a hero-worshipper, was determined that I should do the family thoroughly. Taking assent for granted, he led resolutely on, and I meekly followed.

Before long I was grateful, for if young General Chang is not the biggest figure in China's civil war he is certainly the most amusing.

The " Young Marshal," as the man of tongues insisted on calling him, as if every son of a marshal were born baton in hand, proved to be a burly youth who, at the age of twenty-five, is a general commanding the 27th Division. He had a receding forehead and an inconspicuous chin, wore a white sweater with a black V, and sported black and white American shoes like Tilden's. He spilled

words in an impetuous torrent and was obviously a man of action rather than a statesman.

As the prodigy had an urgent State appointment at Mukden's only club, and I was in an even greater hurry to get back to my hotel, I interrupted the tea-drinking at the third glass and was about to take my departure when the Young Marshal very obligingly offered me a lift in his car. This was a Buick of considerable antiquity and (so he informed me) of incredible power.

"This is a very peaceful country," he remarked, courteously brushing aside a couple of six-shooters from my seat. Fortified by this kindly assurance I climbed in; and with one soldier at the wheel and others clinging to the side, we began to roar our way down the narrow, winding street.

"This is a very clean, progressive city," observed the Young Marshal, continuing his propaganda on behalf of Mukden and his parent's administration. "You see those buildings demolishing at the corner?"

I peered back through the fog of swirling yellow dust, opened my mouth to say, untruthfully, that I did, and was nearly choked.

"That is the biggest engineering work in Mukden," he announced proudly. "We build an electric tram line. Also the soil here is very rich."

"So I should think," I agreed, after a hurried analysis.

"The population of the city," he continued, "has increased since I remember from 17 millions to 30 millions."

"*Thirty millions?*" I knew that the total population of Mukden was not more than half a million, but tried not to sound incredulous. Apparently I failed, for the Young Marshal

pondered for two blocks, or about ten seconds. Then he turned towards me with the sudden radiance of a man who has seen Truth.

"I have made mistake," he generously announced, or rather bellowed, above the uproar of the powerful Buick. "I mean three millions."

"Quite so," I screamed back. "Mistake anyone might make."

And deciding that statistics were not his strong point, I let it go at that, and bade the naïve and likeable Young Marshal a cordial farewell.

## CHAPTER XIII

### JAPAN'S VASSAL STATE

Floods in Korea—A Wayside Town—The Peculiar Korean—Ancient Seoul—Japanese Atrocities and Korean Discontent—Both Sides of the Case—People Well-Governed but Unhappy—A Strange Story.

FOR two or three more days I stayed in Mukden, wandering around its quaint streets and odd byways; and then, about eleven o'clock one night, I boarded the express for Korea.

Every one had warned me not to go. Great floods, so the Japanese officials said, had washed away the line near Antung, and it was impossible to go beyond Shingishu. When would the line be repaired? They smiled blandly, hissed courteously through their teeth, and, bringing forth their words syllable by syllable with an effort like that of a conjurer producing his rabbits, explained that it might be a few days or it might be a week. It all depended on the weather. And in the meanwhile I would be better off in Mukden.

There I differed. I was tired of Mukden, and if I had to wait a few days for the flood to subside, preferred to spend them in a Korean village. And so it came about that when I looked out of my window next morning we were already in Korea and rolling southward through the rain.

It was not a cheerful landscape. Every river was overflowing, the lowlands were flooded, and torrential rains were still falling. Now and then

there would come a break, and one could see a water-logged village, a peasant or two plodding across a field, and the dim outlines of the mist-wreathed hills above the railway line. Then the downpour would begin again, and once more the driving rain and mists would close in like a chill grey shroud.

Shingishu proved to be a curious little place. Fifteen years ago it was pure Korean. There were practically no public buildings or public services, and no sanitation system; and unpaved roads, dusty in the dry season and boggy in the wet, wound their crooked course through a jumble of little houses with hardly a tree to break the monotonous grey or shield them from the burning summer sun. Even now Shingishu would hardly satisfy the more bigoted town-planner; but the Japanese, whatever else they may have done, have certainly brought many changes that the average European would accept as improvements: a good railway service, post and telegraph offices, a cinema show twice a week, a hotel (astonishingly large for so small a place), straight, well-made streets, and long avenues of trees which relieve the drabness and even lend the poor little town a certain distinction.

But Shingishu's chief attraction for me was its inhabitants. By descent, of course, the Koreans are first cousins to the Chinese and the Japanese—a branch of the same Mongol horde which (according to one theory) trekked south and east from the steppes of Siberia and Central Asia and overwhelmed the earlier races whose descendants you may still find in parts of China and Japan.

The Chinese found a region with at least one great valley of amazing fertility, the Japanese an

island home where they were tolerably safe from invasion. The Korean was not so fortunate. A large proportion of the peninsula consists of hills and mountains. There are no large coal and iron deposits, in fact very little mineral wealth of any kind. The rivers, largely owing to the destruction of the trees on the uplands, periodically overflow and ruin thousands of peasant cultivators. And the soil, though the valleys must have been rich once, has been impoverished by constant cropping without artificial manures or any scientific rotation of crops. "The Korean's ancient custom it is not to work very hard," the Japanese hotel manager informed me; but the fact that 17,452,000 Koreans, 367,000 Japanese and 25,000 Chinese (I take the figures of the 1921 census), support themselves on 80,000 square miles, shows that the Korean, despite all that the Japanese say, is no idler. After seeing conditions in his native land it did not surprise me to learn that in Manchuria, Mongolia and Siberia Korean miners and navvies are regarded as even harder workers than the Chinese.

The Koreans are a queer people, with many curious traits and habits. The coolie is none too clean, will sit contentedly on his rickshaw and gossip in the pouring rain, has no sense of decency, and thinks nothing of performing the most intimate acts in full view of a hundred onlookers. The aristocrat is a dandy, and never moves without his stove-pipe hat—a ridiculous affair with a high and tiny crown and a brim of black gauze which will keep off neither the sun nor the rain. He does not take off his hat on going indoors, though he is careful to stand or kneel while his betters sit; and like Beau Brummel, he refuses to take off his hat

to a lady. Rightly or wrongly, the Korean has not a high opinion of women.

Korean houses, too, have their peculiarities. Most of them are enclosed by a wall, have only one entrance, and are divided into two main rooms, one for males and the other for females. Cushions take the place of chairs, and there are no open fireplaces or stoves. Instead the occupants warm the whole house by lighting a fire under the stone floor —probably the earliest form of central heating.

To the compilers of guide books—who, as all the world knows, are very learned men—I am indebted for the additional information that " the greater part of the year is very mild and dry," and that

" the fauna of Korea includes several species of deer, the tiger, leopard, wild boar, bear, wolf, fox and numerous fur-bearing animals, among which the sable and the sea otter are the most valuable. The entire peninsula is thoroughly stocked with cattle, horses and pigs. Game birds of almost infinite variety and all the domestic birds abound."

I have known places that are drier, and I met men who had tramped the country diligently in search of tiger, leopard and bear and had not found even a fox. But, if one may judge from the regular appearance of certain dishes on the menus, I can quite believe in the abundance of domestic birds.

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Two days I stayed at Shingishu, and then the rain slackened, and the railway officials looked less doleful. I gathered that only half a mile of rail and a bridge had been washed away ; and I saw no reason why I shouldn't cross the gap on foot and board another train on the other side. At first they raised objections about my luggage. How was it to be carried over ? Who would pay

the coolies? And so forth. Eventually everything was arranged, however, and at four o'clock next morning I climbed out into a thin drizzling rain, and began to trudge along the embankment where the line had once been laid. It was in rather a mess just then—sleepers and ballast washed away, rails twisted, culverts destroyed and wreckage strewn for half a mile to leeward. But hundreds of Koreans were working away under Japanese engineers and had already erected a skeleton bridge. I noticed that, like the scaffoldings of even the largest Chinese buildings, it had not a single bolt or rail. The whole thing was tied together with ropes.

An hour later the last of the Korean travellers—I was the solitary European—had climbed aboard the train beyond the wash-out, and at eight o'clock next morning, without any further mishap, I found myself in Seoul.

The Korean capital, a city of 250,000 inhabitants, nestles in a hollow amidst encircling hills. Around it runs a stone wall, 20 feet high and 12 miles in circumference, built at the beginning of the Yi dynasty, 500 years ago, by 208,000 men. In the old days the city was further protected by a number of fortresses on the adjacent hills, the most formidable being Puk Han, on the peak called Sam Kak. It is a stiff climb of about four hours to the summit; but it is worth the fag to see the old palace, the monasteries, the quaint mountain village, the waterfall, and, far off, like a silver haze, the sea.

Seoul is an ancient city, and for a thousand years probably changed little. But then came the Japanese. The Yi dynasty, which had lasted 519 years, with twenty-six kings and two emperors,

came to an inglorious and rather tragic end ; and in August, 1910, the conquerors annexed the country and proceeded to give the reluctant Koreans post-offices, railways, ports, banks, cinema theatres, and all the other blessings of civilization. To-day you will probably find a cool storage chamber next to a pagoda, and every slant-eyed youngster wants to caddy at the links and chatter about Jackie Coogan.

Are the Koreans better off ? I do not know. It depends entirely on your scale of values.

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## II. A Race of Malcontents

In many ways, I think, Korea is rather like Ireland : the truth about it is difficult to learn and still more difficult to tell. On the one hand you have the hostile outsider, prejudiced from the beginning by stories of Japanese atrocities and Korean discontent ; on the other is the Japanese apologist stating the case for the defence. The world at large does not know which is right but accepts the hostile view, either because we are always ready to believe the worst, or because of a more generous desire to side on general principles with the under-dog.

Even at best the story of the conquest does not make pleasant reading. During the Russo-Japanese war some Koreans, accused of having cut telegraph wires at the instigation of American missionaries, were crucified by Japanese soldiers. Later, a hall full of Korean malcontents was locked and burned with all inside it. During the passive revolt of three years ago, unarmed malecontents were shot down wholesale by panic-stricken militarists—a piece of unprovoked savag-

ery for which the Japanese Government recalled all the leading officials from the Governor-General down. And, any excuse being good enough for a massacre of Koreans, just as it used to be for a pogrom in Russia, the young patriots of Japan took advantage of the earthquake to spear and bayonet every Korean on whom they could lay their hands.

All this, of course, is inexcusable. But the fact remains that an impartial investigator will probably leave Korea with rather less sympathy for the Koreans, and a much more favourable impression of Japanese rule, than he had when he came in. Though the Japanese have made glaring blunders, and have written too many chapters in blood, I believe that they are honestly doing their best to-day to atone for the past and wipe out its sombre memories.

Why, then, have they failed? One factor has been the appalling tactlessness of their high officials in disregarding Korean customs and sentiment. Even when the Emperor died the Japanese would not allow the subjects of the old man—a rascal, but, like many rascals, well beloved—the last sad privilege of burying him in their own fashion. They insisted on giving him a state funeral in which the Koreans had no part beyond a humble ceremony outside the city walls.

An even bigger factor is probably the peculiar temperament of the people. The Korean is one of those unhappy beings who can neither govern himself nor submit cheerfully to the rule of others; and the history of the country is one long miserable record of squabbling, plotting, robbing and killing, with hardly a redeeming glimmer of patriotism, statesmanship or even common sense.

First you find one party enjoying the favour of a supine Emperor and beheading the leader of the opposition. Then some favourite or concubine pulls the strings, and the rival party has its glorious innings and evens up the score. Some culture the Korean has, and always did have ; Korea, indeed, was the medium through which Japan acquired something of the literature and civilization of China. But he has no political sense, no organizing ability, and no sense of national unity. An idea of his mentality may be gathered from the fact that the two chief parties which schemed and executed each other for centuries had their origin in a difference of opinion about some such issue as the correct way of wearing a rosette at court. Once appreciate the Korean's irresponsibility, utter selfishness and entire lack of real patriotism, as distinct from a love of fervid oratory, and one ceases to wonder that he eventually came under the sway of a stronger race, especially when that race badly needed the country for strategic reasons.

Quite probably, since man cannot escape the influence of environment, geographical and economic conditions have played their part in warping and embittering the Korean's spirit. For even at its best Korea is not a smiling land. In every direction bleak, barren hills and mountains, smeared with brown and yellow where the floods have bared the rock, rise gaunt and forbidding against the sky. Its trees are but stunted firs. Its villages are ugly and poor, even judged by Chinese standards. I have known people grow rapturous about Korea, and it has a certain beauty ; but it is a beauty of low tones—dark greens and browns, with ugly yellow scars across the faces of

the hills. At its worst, as it was when I first saw it, the whole atmosphere of the country is extraordinarily melancholy and depressing.

And Korea is not only an uninviting land ; most of it is very poor. The hill country is not only barren and quite unfitted for cultivation, but has long since been denuded of most of its trees by a short-sighted and shiftless peasantry. The area fit for crop is too small to offer the people anything more than the barest necessities. And the climate, with its great extremes, is not of the sort that makes for outdoor recreation, health or happiness. All through the summer heat the peasant works fifteen hours a day in the fields, most of the time (if he happens to be a rice grower) up to his knees in water. In winter the land is frozen and he can do little but sit indoors and brood.

If some emphasis has been laid here on the unprepossessing side of Korea and the Koreans, the reason is fairly obvious. To arrive at the truth we must first get rid of the myth that the Japanese found a happy, prosperous and united people and reduced them to a state of servitude and discontent. The Koreans probably never were united or contented under any government, and it is quite certain that they have never before had a government which was not only corrupt but hopelessly inefficient as well. Though Japan has done many things in Korea that are not pleasant to think about, the Koreans were never before so well governed. It is true that with the introduction of modern business the gulf between rich and poor has widened ; and I am told that the professional beggar class which is so conspicuous to-day was almost unknown twenty years ago, when everyone had at least enough to eat. But in almost every

other material way the government of the country, judged by Western standards, is incomparably better. Japan has planted trees on the denuded hills and given Korea handsome public buildings, the usual public services, police, and (what the Korean never had before) a system of justice which is quite impartial as between Korean and Korean—though whether the Korean fares as well against a Japanese is more doubtful. The country is peaceful and orderly, the few bands of so-called malcontents under arms are mostly desperadoes who relish a chance to cloak brigandage with patriotism, and altogether the country is benefiting in a hundred ways from Japanese rule. And yet the Korean is unhappy, and the spirit of revolt, repressed because active resistance is hopeless, keeps simmering below the surface.

It is impossible not to sympathize with his dreams of independence; he is apparently so tragically in earnest, so ready to sacrifice everything for the cause he loves. But history shows that that has always been the Korean's way. He will declaim about his country's woes till the tears stream down his face. Give him a chance to do something and he forgets what he was fighting for and lapses into bitter squabbles with his former friends. And even if, by some miracle, he does look like achieving something, his followers will pull him down, for the Korean is by instinct against the government, and knows no motive so strong as jealousy. It is safe to say that if the Japanese withdrew to-morrow every public service would be in a hopeless muddle in less than six months.

These are the facts, and they are plain for all to see. But to draw fair deductions from them is not

so easy as hasty critics suppose. Summed up, I think, it all amounts to this: does the introduction of trains, schools and so forth justify a superior race in imposing its rule upon a weaker? Or has every nation, however backward, the right to govern itself in any way it thinks fit?

That is the real problem of Korea, just as it is the real problem of Ireland, of India, of Egypt and of the Philippines. And since it is a matter of opinion and ethics rather than of fact and law, the question is one that everyone must answer for himself.

* * * * *

I left Seoul with many pleasant memories and impressions, oddly mixed: vistas of distant valleys; quaint buildings silhouetted against the sombre bulk of Nam San; a delightful afternoon with Bishop Trollope, who showed me the library of choice Korean books and manuscripts, including the forty volumes of the sixteenth-century writer Toi Kyei—almost as "industrious and calligraphic" a man as Southey, which he has collected during nearly thirty years; a golf course so short that Abe Mitchell or Mr. Wethered would reach the green from the tee at six of the nine holes; the Chosen Hotel, one of the handsomest and best-appointed in all the Far East; and a call at the residence of the British Consul, where a thin, fair-haired young man left me standing on the verandah for ten minutes and returned with the information, which I took the liberty of doubting, that the Consul was out.

This last episode was rather curious, I think. In the course of my travels I met many distinguished statesmen, generals and diplomats—Eng-

lishmen, Dutchmen, Germans, Chinese, Japanese and Bolsheviks ; and I received the utmost courtesy from each and every one of them except this representative of my own race in lonely Seoul.

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### III. A Channel Crossing

From Seoul to Fusan it is 275 miles, and, for all I know, the traveller passes all manner of marvels by the way. But I left Seoul late at night, and when I opened my eyes next morning we were very near Fusan.

Fusan is to Korea what Dover is to England, with Shimonoseki playing the part of Calais. Strategically, it is not nearly as important as Port Arthur, but as a ferry port it is invaluable. And it has a certain gaunt beauty. Grim hills hem it in on the landward side, and in front are rocky headlands and islands which break the force of the fierce southerly gales. But the town itself is commonplace enough, and I was not sorry to reach the wharf and board one of the splendid Japanese ferry boats which maintain the morning and evening service across the Straits.

My three porters, apparently in the last stages of exhaustion, staggered up the gangway, set down my golf clubs and two small suit-cases on the deck, and demanded one yen. Following the usual formula, I divided by four, added 15 per cent. as a bonus and handed them 40 sen. The result was a chorus of expostulation.

" What's the trouble ? " demanded a strident voice ; and at my elbow I found a damsel who might have stepped out of a Keystone Comedy. She had a round face, turned-up nose, black eyes, lank hair " bobbed " into uneven chunks, a shape-

less figure, and thick ankles around which her stockings ominously drooped. Instinctively one looked for the chewing-gum.

"They want one yen," I explained.

"One yen!" She turned on the erring porters with the expression of a hanging judge, burst into a torrent of Japanese, and advanced on the spokesman until her brown forefinger sawed the air immediately under his nose. What she said I do not know, but it was wonderfully effective. The porters, finding that argument merely provoked her to fresh fury, gave up the struggle and slunk muttering down the gangway.

The hoyden flung a parting insult after them, and turned to me with a sudden shriek of laughter.

"Hot work, dis-puting," she said. "Have, please, a drink with me."

Taking my assent for granted, she led the way to the saloon, flopped into a chair, ordered (of all things) a bottle of beer, and obstinately insisted on paying for it herself. And while she sipped her beer she gave me glimpses of a strange life and the workings of an even stranger mind.

She was a Russian, she told me, and her name was Helen; and to prove it she pulled out an autographed photograph—one of a dozen she had in her bag, apparently as substitutes for cards—and graciously assured me I might keep it. She was sixteen years old and had lived all her life with her mother in Seoul, the capital of Korea. Yes, her father was alive, she believed. But, alive or dead, what did it matter? Had not the dog gone off fifteen years ago with another woman and left her mother to shift for herself?

"No brothers or sisters?" I said. "What a pity!"

"A pity?" She shrugged her shoulders with the terrible cynicism of those who have been disillusioned young. Helen, it seemed, had come face to face with the ugly realities of life at an age when most of us still believe in fairies; and out of bitter experience she had evolved a philosophy of which the fundamentals were distrust of her fellow men, a resolute independence, and fierce rebellion against what she regarded as the hypocritical cant of the missions.

"Each of us is alone," she said. "Brothers marry and go forth and put their sisters from their minds and hearts. They go their path; she must go hers. No one can help you, no one. The missionaries say, 'Come to church and pray'; but I say no. When I have troubled days and a heavy heart I send up my own prayer from a secret place. If God will not listen unless I shout with the rest, then I'll have no God at all. At the missions they talk of brotherly love. Words, empty words! I know. I see brothers leave sisters, and sister strike sister; and so I swear years ago to go my way alone. What I like I do, and not missionary or even my own mother shall turn me. I have chosen my own path, and I shall follow it to the end."

She had picked up English at the mission schools—mainly from Americans, judging from her accent—but, being poor, had lived all her life amongst the Koreans and the Japanese. She spoke their languages, as well as Russian, like a native, and had learned to judge everything by their standards. She played with a little Korean boy in childhood, fought with him, later fell in love with him, and finally saw him married by his parents to a Korean. She saw nothing strange in

a white girl loving a Korean, for yellow men were the only men she knew. But she had no illusions about their character. The average Korean youth, as she painted him, was not exactly a Galahad. He had no respect for a girl, she said, always sat in a tram while she stood, and thought nothing of striking her. Several times she had been attacked by louts armed with iron bars, and once she had been forced to defend herself—she recalled this with tomboyish glee—by kicking one and striking another heavily in the face.

"Women!" she sneered. "What is a woman to a Japanese or a Korean? A dog! You're all right till you marry one, and then you're in the dirt beneath his feet."

"Then why not marry a white man?" I suggested.

"I do not know white men," she replied hesitatingly. "Japanese and Koreans I can read. But what is in the white man's mind and heart I do not know."

I assured her that at all events she would not be ill-treated.

"That is not what the Japanese and Koreans tell me," she said doubtfully. And once more she spoke, a little wistfully, of the Korean she used to play with, and, in spite of everything, apparently still loved.

Helen and the ordinary white girl live in different worlds, but I found one thing she had in common with her sisters (as Macaulay might have said) beyond the Arctic Circle and beneath the Southern Cross. She had a passion for the "movies." Had I seen Rudolf Valentino in this, Tom Mix in that? Didn't I think Marion Davies the most beautiful girl on the screen?

And so she went on till I discovered that she was even fonder of riding. It appeared—mind you, I do not vouch for her story—that she had been a jockey for several years, and had ridden in races at Dairen and other Korean towns. Tremendously exciting she had found it, and great fun ; but it seems that the yellow man has his own ideas of sportsmanship. If he backs a horse and it fails to win, he not infrequently signifies his displeasure with stones.

Helen's great ambition as a jockey, she told me, was to win the Dairen cup. How she achieved it, and then lost the trophy, is so strange a story that I suspected she was borrowing from the screen. But Korea is a strange place and Helen is a strange girl, and so it may be true.

" I was in the train, with my riding-clothes on, and a box of Chinese cigarettes in the case with the cup," she said. " Then the customs officer come, and I go yellow with fright, for I remember the smuggled cigarettes. I have no money to pay a 2000-yen fine—oh, they are very strict !—and I don't like to go to prison, so I make excuse and leave the carriage. As frightened as hell I am. And then—I am desperate, you understand—I see the river, and dive through the window into the water far below.

" When I come up the train has gone. I swim a long way, and a boatman pick me up. I give him 50 yen to say nothing, and he row me to Shingishu. I stay there three days, very ill with the coldness of the water, and then I go home. I read in the paper there that a jockey with the name I ride under has been killed, and so I know that I am safe. But never again can I ride in races. Helen the jockey is dead."

Helen was travelling to Tokyo to take an engagement as a dancer. Watching her ugly walk and ungraceful figure, one could hardly imagine her blossoming into a Pavlova ; but at least she has one asset—grit.

" When I go to Japan last year," she said, " my mother try to stop me. When I still go, she say ' telegraph when your money is all gone, and if I have it I will send more.' But I get work and in a month, instead of telegraphing, I write : ' Here, mother, is a hundred yen.' Now I go again ; and when I succeed do you know what I shall do ? Buy an aeroplane and become a flier. I can drive a car now, and in Japan I shall take lessons in aviation. They tell me that if I qualify and take a Japanese name the Government will engage me for good. And then "—she clasped her hands rapturously—" then I shall fly round the world."

Japan already has a girl pilot and is doing all she can to advertise and encourage flying ; and so it is just possible that some day Helen's wild dream may come true.

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We left Shimonoseki that evening by different trains. The last I saw of her she was on the station. She had pulled off her hat, was sitting on her suit-case and, with an impish grin on her face, was exchanging pleasantries with a ring of Japanese porters.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FROM THE ASHES

Two Sides of Japan—The Ugly Lowlands—Dull Cities—Forbidden Dances and Improving Films—Men and Manners—Dialogue on a Train—Rebuilding Tokyo and Yokohama—Japan's Uphill Struggle.

THE foreigner who goes to Japan with the usual preconceptions is destined, unless he has the happy and not uncommon gift of seeing only what he wants, to sudden disillusionment. Japan, he finds, is the Jekyll-Hyde among the nations; not one country, but two.

To most people, I suppose, Japan is a place of graceful embroideries and fantastic decorations. So Lafcadio Hearn and Pierre Loti painted it in exquisitely coloured prose; visiting European artists have tried hard, though with a heavy hand, to follow the mode; and playwrights, film-producers, tourist agencies, picture-postcard printers, the Birmingham and Dresden manufacturers of rare Japanese antiques, and, in a small way, travellers, have all helped to keep alive the tradition. Between them they have done their work so well that, to ninety-nine people out of a hundred, the word Japan instantly suggests the stuff of schoolgirls' dreams—cherry-blossoms, Fujiyama, little temples in bamboo groves, shimmering lakes, the quaint pageantry and soiled beauties of the Yoshiwara, geishas more exquisite than the figures of a fan, and all the other stage-pro-

perties of a land where life, lacking the hard reality and red-blooded robustness of the West, is played out as a pastoral or a delicate comedy of manners.

But another and very different Japan has sprung up since Hearn and Loti : a land of great ports and manufacturing cities, sooty with the smoke of factory chimneys, humming with machinery and traffic, ugly as only man's handiwork can be. And this, for the most part, was the Japan I saw. When others are summoning up visions of mountain groves and pretty ceremonial, I see electric trams, Fords, hideous factories, crowds hurrying to work, youths swinging canes and puffing complacently at cigarettes, taxis, newsboys, waitresses, simpering and unhurried, shuffling along with whiskies and sodas, and all the thousand and one ingredients that make up that curious mess, a modern city. Once upon a time, if you wanted to get at the spirit of Japan, you walked into a little place of bamboo and matting, slowly sipped tea, and smiled, with delicious daring, at geishas. Now you need only watch the mechanics and shop-girls clattering to work, or, better still, step inside the nearest bank or office and see one girl taking dictation in shorthand while another works the adding machine with flying fingers and a third operates a mountainous typewriter—no mean feat, this—with 2,000 different characters. Japan is in the iron grip of big business.

It is a violent change, and it has not brought its compensations. In Shanghai the European resident may hear good music, dance and see moving pictures, if such things appeal to him ; and Peking, as I have said, has a social atmo-

sphere of a very delightful kind. The great city of Tokyo has no European theatres, no cabarets or dance halls, and a very limited repertoire of films. There used to be dancing on the roof of the Imperial Hotel ; but one day a high-spirited young Japanese ripped up his abdomen to the strains of a fox-trot as a protest against the treatment of his countrymen in America, and thenceforth dancing was forbidden.

Instead, there is an open-air cinema show. Here I spent two hours watching a *mélange*, rolling eyes, heaving, half-nude bosoms, brandished whips, flights through the storm, trees crashing down at precisely the right moment to crush the baffled villain, and all the other features of life according to Hollywood.

Looking at the Japanese men and women who sipped cool drinks and gazed at the screen with a smile of amusement or derision, I suddenly felt less superior than the normal white man thinks he has a perfect right to be.

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But I was talking, I think, about the ugliness of Japan's great cities, and the drabness of the lowland plains. People tell me, of course, that in places the islands are beautiful, even wonderful ; and I believe them. But it so happened that, apart from the hills and ravines of the south-west, I saw mainly the country's prosaic side ; and, to be honest, I was not as sorry as I should have been. In the East Indies, China and Korea I had already seen so much of the fantastic and highly coloured that I felt rather like a man who has been living for months on nothing but caviare or nightingales' tongues. Just as that diet would

probably produce a craving for roast beef, so I began to long, more than I had ever thought possible, for the gums and open grass lands of Australia, or the trim meadows and gnarled trees that weave patterns in exquisite black tracery against England's leaden skies.

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## II. "Climbers" of the East

But if industrial Japan is almost as ugly as Wolverhampton, Glasgow or Pittsburg, the people provide some compensation. I found something very likeable about the smiling little fellows who hail you on railway stations (why I have never been able to discover) with the sterotyped "Sff-ha! I am ver-ree sor-ree for you"; and the impact of Western methods and ideas upon the conservatism of the East is not without its interest and humour.

This I discovered one day on the Tokyo Express. It was dinner-time, and the three of us—two Americans and myself—staggered along the lurching car and dropped into our seats.

Across the aisle, two Japanese were already dining, and, for want of something better to do, we watched them—idly at first, and then with something of the intentness that is the lawful due of the man who charms serpents or swallows scorpions.

"Can you beat it?" demanded one of the Americans, as we listened to the little men at their soup. And with a gesture of disgust he chopped up meat, vegetables and other ingredients into small pieces, stirred it energetically, laid aside his knife and fork, and proceeded to attack the mess with a spoon . . .

Soup over, the Japanese gripped their knives and forks halfway down the blade and began to dismember chickens.

"Yes, sir!" continued the American, as he washed down a mouthful with a copious draught of coffee, "the knife play of these guys is surely fierce. . . . Say! Do you get that?"

The Japanese had finished dinner, and, with jaws cavernously yawning, were probing their molars with tooth-picks. Fascinated, I watched this remarkable exhibition and suddenly felt less hungry. Then, having finished his explorations into the unknown interior, one of them closed his mouth, made thoughtful noises through his teeth, shortened his grip on the shaft, and methodically turned to his ears.

"This," announced one of the Americans, "is where I get off."

Said the other: "You've spat a bootful."

And all three of us filed out.

"Japanese women," observed one of my new acquaintances, in the tone of a judge passing sentence, "Japanese women are wonderful! Yes, sirrah! I'll tell the world they are. But Japanese men—aw, hell! There isn't a gentleman in the whole bunch."

And to emphasize his disgust, he shifted his cigar and spat, with a slight inaccuracy for which the swaying of the train was probably to blame, at a spittoon a long way away.

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At the moment I was almost inclined to agree with him, for most of the Japanese I had seen so far were not particularly engaging. They were all polite, and doubtless well-meaning, but this

world of ours is so peculiarly constituted that it takes a deal of good intentions to atone for a little habit of gurgling over the tea or hissing with the soup.

I remembered, though, that one could hardly expect to run against the fine flower of Japan's aristocracy in the course of a week or two in Korea and three or four days spent mainly in Japanese trains; and very soon I was glad I had avoided a very stupid generalization. Within the next week it was my privilege to meet Prince Tokugawa, President of the House of Peers; Baron Shidehara, Minister for Foreign Affairs; Viscount Goto, formerly Minister for Home Affairs; and a number of other statesmen, officials and leading business men; and I found, as I might have expected, that the Japanese aristocrat differed from the sort I had been meeting even more than the average man in a London tube would differ from (let's say) Lord Balfour. He has the Englishman's regard for form, the American's ease and cheerful good-fellowship, the Frenchman's courtesy and tact, and the poise that indicates breeding everywhere. After a week of unfailing courtesy and quite astonishing kindness, I left Tokyo with many pleasant memories, and the conviction that the Japanese at his best is one of the world's finest and most charming gentlemen.

Everybody cannot be an aristocrat, of course; and one must admit that Japan's bourgeoisie, judged by Western standards, is very bourgeois indeed. What else can you expect of a nation that is still in the transition stage between East and West? The Japanese that you find in high places has probably been educated at an English or American University, has almost certainly

spent some years abroad, and dresses and speaks after the manner of a well-bred Anglo-Saxon.

But the vast majority of his fellow-countrymen are only just beginning to acquire Western habits, and, politically, commercially and socially, are still busy "climbing." They try hard, and study a European's habits and clothes with all the earnestness of a suburban heiress laboriously creeping "in"; but the rules of the game are still quite new to them, and it is neither surprising nor discreditable if they make strange noises with their meals and are a little uncertain about the functions of a knife and fork. They are not the real thing yet, perhaps; but, all things considered, many of them make a very good shot at it.

And they are very likeable. Some, like the fellows we met on the train, are a little uncouth —though not much worse than many a gross European; and some are inclined to be officious, as is only natural in a country where officialdom has run mad.

Japan, I should think, regulates the life of the individual more strictly than any country in the world, and, with the exception of Russia, entrusts wider discretionary powers to even the least of the legion who wear uniforms.

The average Japanese probably doesn't mind, for he is used to it; but there is a growing resentment amongst the younger democrats, especially those who have been educated abroad and become accustomed to the larger and freer atmosphere of England or America.

"When I got back from the United States," one young fellow told me, "I was full of ideas about the liberty of the individual and his rights at law. Well, late one night I was returning

home past a park, and as its dark corners didn't seem very safe, I walked in the middle of the street. A policeman told me to walk on the footpath. I refused, and he locked me up. I drafted an indignant speech I was going to make to the magistrate, and I surely expected to see that policeman get hell." (Have I explained that the Japanese went to a first-class American University ?) " But next day nothing happened, and my courage began to ooze. On the second morning they asked me was I going to apologize to the policeman or go to gaol for a month ; and by this time I hadn't a kick left in me. I saw then that the policeman was right and I was wrong. Did I swallow my pride and apologize ? You bet I did. Since then I've scrapped the rights of man and said nothing ; and when a policeman says ' Jump ! ' I jump."

And no doubt he was wise. But even though it is easy to commend martyrdom to others, I could not help wondering what sort of a place the world would be if its Wilhelm Tells and Hampdens had been animated by the same spirit.

Still, in spite of their officiousness, the Japanese on the whole are as courteous and pleasant a race as one can find anywhere. Train officials will do anything for you except depart from their cast-iron regulations, a clerk in a bank or a government office will spend half an hour trying—probably in vain—to tell you what you want to know, and a perfect stranger will walk half a mile out of his way to show you the place you are looking for. And, after all, it is innate courtesy of this kind, rather than surface polish, that counts in the final reckoning.

The pains that the average Japanese will take

to help a stranger may be judged from a little experience I had on a Tokyo tram. I asked the young conductor to set me down at the corner nearest a certain bank. Ten minutes went by and he made no sign, so I concluded that, like the conductors I was used to, he had forgotten all about me. Rather irritated, I walked to the end of the car where he was busy with a pencil and paper, and reminded him of my request.

"Ah, yes, sir," he said cheerfully. "The next street it is yours. And here"—he handed me a neatly-drawn plan of the streets, with the bank clearly shown—"is the location you ask, sir."

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### III. Dialogue in a Train

In time I even became friendly with the passport examiners who make Korea and the Japanese ports their happy hunting ground. But the feeling was not spontaneous For a time I was regarded, I thought, with half-veiled disfavour ; and I know that at first they almost maddened me. The cross-examinations recurred so monotonously that I used to lie at night in lurching trains and, in the stage between consciousness and sleep, conduct imaginary conversations which owed nothing at all to Landor.

"What is your name?" And a stern-faced little fellow, notebook in hand, pops up beside my bunk.

"Jones," I tell him.

"Jones? Fff-ha!" He draws in his breath with that hissing intake which the Japanese considers the hall-mark of breeding. "What nationality?"

"British."

"Fff-ha. Your age? Where do you come from?"

"Age twenty-eight. China."

"Where did you live in China?"

"Mainly in trains."

"Mainly in trains?" He writes it down. "Where are you going to? On what business?"

"Tokyo. No business. Just seeing the place."

"Fff-ha. No business." He clearly regards this as suspicious, and makes a note. "Your name is Jones, yes? How old are you?"

"Still twenty-eight."

"Where did you get that passport?" He holds it dramatically before my eyes, like a third degree expert trying to wring a confession from the innocent girl prisoner in an American "crook" drama. And by this time my mind is beginning to wander.

"Lord Forster, the Governor-General of Australia, gave it to me. That is his signature. He won't do it for every one, you know, but when he heard I was going away he said, 'Look here, Jones, my boy, if there's anything I can do to——'"

"You have a wife?" he breaks in accusingly.

"No."

"Have you any children?"

"Certainly not."

"Fffa-ha. You have another name?"

"Yes—Galahad. But I try to keep it dark. You see, my godfathers and godmothers seem to have run a trifle dry of ideas at the font, and having seen a play by Arthur Adams——"

"You have no wife."

"Absolutely none."

"And no children."

"Not one."

"Ffa-ha. I see. And your nationality?"

"British."

A great light dawns on the examiner's face and it suddenly relaxes.

"Ha!" he cries, with all the enthusiasm of an explorer announcing a sensational discovery. "*You are Mr. Galahad Jones? You are British?*"

"Yes, yes, yes. Good man! You've got it! Don't let go. Galahad Jones. British. Age twenty-eight. No wife. No children."

"Fff-ha." He ponders a full minute, and reveals a last lingering doubt.

"This lady"—pointing to a stout Eurasian with a baby bulging over the opposite berth—"she is not your wife?"

"She is not."

"Thank you."

Satisfied at last, he abruptly returns the passport, shows his teeth in a pleasant smile, lifts his hat courteously, collapses suddenly in the middle, straightens again, and departs.

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This sort of thing happened so often that in time I passed from irritation to wonder.

"Why on earth do they keep on asking questions, many of them quite useless, over and over again?" I said to an experienced friend in Tokyo.

"Good Lord," he replied, "they don't mean any harm. They do it to practise their English."

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### IV. Amidst the Ruins

I had come to Japan with a definite and prosaic object: to see what progress was being made

with the rebuilding of the ruined cities, to find out the extent to which trade was suffering from the slump that followed the war, and to estimate as closely as I could the effect of adversity on Japan's policy in the Pacific.

I began my investigations at Tokyo and Yokohama, and was surprised to find that, though nearly a year had passed since the disaster, no permanent buildings had been erected, and nowhere had the work of reconstruction actually begun. The great majority of the people of Tokyo were still living and working in the 180,000 temporary houses and shops that had been thrown up at a cost of £40,000,000 ; and, viewed from a height, the capital was one vast grey sea of low, flimsy makeshifts in which a million men, women and children alternately sweltered and froze. Thirty thousand people were still living in tents and barracks, and in every public park I found a miniature city of toy houses, complete even to open-air cafés, little shops displaying their trashy wares, and a barber's shop consisting of a sheet of iron for a roof, bags for walls, and a painted pole.

In Yokohama conditions were even worse. Many firms with headquarters in Tokyo had not attempted to rebuild ; others had contented themselves with temporary offices no bigger than a garage, and everywhere were big open spaces with stacks of bricks and gutted walls lying like ugly scars upon the city's face. Some of the people, with man's instinctive clinging to the patch of earth he calls home, had returned and were living amongst the ruins in shelters built of a few galvanized iron sheets, loose bricks, plaited cane, and anything else they could get

hold of. But their pathetic attempts at home-building only deepened the pervading sense of tragedy and desolation.

It was in Yokohama, of course, that the disaster reached its appalling climax. Tokyo was left with 2,880 of its largest buildings still standing, but Yokohama was literally wiped out. And Yokohama, too, has the darker future. Tokyo will soon be rebuilt into a larger, more prosperous, and in every way better-designed city than it was before. But Yokohama, though it will benefit from replanning, is never likely to regain its old position. Japanese business men told me that owing to the concentration of trade in Tokyo in recent years, the importance of Yokohama has been steadily declining. So long as they had big premises in Yokohama the importing firms continued to transact much of their business there. Now they have moved to Tokyo for good, and, if they are represented at the port at all, they will maintain only small branches or agencies.

Yokohama has suffered, also, from the natural but hardly creditable anxiety of rival ports to take advantage of its prostration. If Kobe had its way, so a Tokyo banker told me, Yokohama would never recover. Both the Government and the banks have intervened and made it a matter of policy to assist the stricken port as far as possible; but it is not likely that Yokohama will ever regain its old position.

I believe that when Japan looks back upon the period of reconstruction she will realize that she missed, or only half-heartedly grasped, a great and (in the proper sense of the word) a unique opportunity. Two-thirds of her capital and practically all Yokohama had been wiped out, and the

ground was clear for the rebuilding of two noble cities of open spaces, beautiful parks, broad, straight streets and inspiring architecture.

And, as luck would have it, Viscount Goto, the Minister in charge of Reconstruction, was the one man in Japan with the rare vision and courage that the project required. Within a week, while others were still appalled and numbed, he had produced a scheme beside which the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire and the remodelling of Paris under the third Napoleon were simply dwarfed. Estimating the total damage at from £1,000,000,000 to £1,300,000,000—other experts, including Mr. Kushida, president of the Mitsubishi Bank, put it at about £600,000,000 or £700,000,000—Viscount Goto suggested that £350,000,000 be raised as the State's share in the work of reconstruction. This, he estimated, would cover the cost of railways, tramways, telephone and telegraph services, canals, parks, and the laying down of broad, straight concrete streets where only tortuous, dusty alleys were before.

But, as Viscount Goto admitted to me, he revealed his plans too soon. While he was visualizing the great cities of the future, and in his dreams walking their boulevards and parks, others looked around and could see only death and smoking ruins.

"My colleagues were shocked that I should talk in billions," he said. "Others did not hesitate to say that I was both mad and a devil. Perhaps some day, owing to my good fortune in not having to carry out my plan, they will go to the other extreme and hail me as a god."

As an alternative plan, Goto proposed that the

State should buy the devastated area, rebuild, and sell it back to the people at a price equal to the cost of the land plus the value of the improvements. Here his figures were even more terrifying, and it was something like his first plan, in a modified form, that the Cabinet eventually adopted. But even this he could not carry through. An unbalanced student tried to kill the Prince Regent, and Japan's peculiar political code required that the whole Cabinet should resign.

Since then the Goto plan has been cut and cut until the total cost is now set down at about £120,000,000. A Bureau of Reconstruction is busy collecting data, and all sorts of laws have been passed, including one forbidding the erection of any permanent building for three years. By this time, the optimists think, the general plan may be completed.

A particularly interesting feature of the gigantic scheme—for even in its reduced form it is still the greatest project of the kind ever undertaken—is the Government's decision to confiscate the land needed for public improvements. It was found that if the land were simply resumed along the street frontages in the usual way 500,000 people would be homeless and their back-door neighbours would suddenly find themselves with valuable frontages on the new broad streets. It was decided, therefore, to take a certain amount from everybody, compensation being given only where the area resumed exceeds 10 per cent. of the holding. This plan has the merit of being fair, and the drawback that every single house will have to be moved back in the general process of contraction.

Almost incredibly clumsy and expensive such a scheme would be with us, but it must be remembered that nearly all the buildings in Tokyo and Yokohama are only temporary and can be abolished, like Mr. Beerbohm's burning skyscraper, in less time than they took to put up. House-shifting is not such a serious problem in a land where many a pathetic makeshift home can be moved quite a long way in an hour by any active fellow with a barrow.

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**V. Lost Markets and Empty Ships**

The burden of reconstruction has fallen upon Japan just when she is in the midst of her second great struggle. The markets won during the war have slipped away as easily as they came. Cheap foreign goods, more especially those made in Germany, are underselling the Japanese even in their home markets. Japan's enormous carrying trade, built up while Britain's merchant marine was less profitably engaged, has dwindled away until now great fleets lie idle in port or sail the seas with ballast and empty saloons. (A liner arrived from America while I was in Tokyo with only one passenger, and he came steerage.) And on top of all this, at the very time when every hand and every penny are needed for reproductive work, the country has to lavish treasure and labour on the rebuilding of the devastated area.

Faced with such a tremendous task, even a much richer country might be forgiven a little pessimism, a little wailing and weakening of spirit. But you find nothing of the kind in Japan. Quietly, serenely and cheerfully, without one whining note or useless lament, the people are

settling down to a long and dogged struggle to rebuild ruined cities and lost trade.

Some Spartan spirits, indeed, hail last year's disaster as a blessing in disguise, a scourge sent by heaven to purge the land of its follies and vices ; and even those whose religion does not take them as far as that are inclined to think that the tragedy brought certain compensations.

" Our people were winning success too easily and were suffering mentally and morally," a leading statesman told me. " We all know now that there is no short cut to success and that Japan can win through only by hard work, thrift and the unselfish co-operation of all classes."

It must not be supposed that the present depression in Japan is due entirely, or even mainly, to the earthquake. That disaster was certainly appalling in its magnitude and horror, even though the loss of life and property was considerably exaggerated at the time. Admittedly, also, it is a great misfortune for Japan that, at a time when she needs to strain every nerve to keep pace with her rivals, she should have to divert a great deal of money and labour from reproductive work to the reconstruction of Tokyo and Yokohama. But, as Japanese financiers will tell you, the fact remains that the earthquake was not the cause of the present trade depression, and has not even accentuated it to anything like the extent that one would naturally expect.

" The economic importance of the disaster has been greatly exaggerated," I was told by Mr. R. Ichinomya, vice-president of the Tokyo branch of the Yokohama Specie Bank. " Had Osaka been destroyed we should have been very badly hit. But Tokyo is mainly a consuming and distribut-

ing centre, and Yokohama depends on its shipping rather than on manufactures. There was enormous loss—that goes without saying ; but happily it left the foundations of Japanese industry—its producing areas—still fairly sound. Nearly all the big manufacturing concerns of Tokyo and Yokohama have branches elsewhere, and so you find the apparently extraordinary fact that businesses which seemed to be wiped out are not only carrying on but paying dividends. Take, as a case in point, the Fuji Silk Company. Its principal works were totally destroyed, and yet the company has just declared a dividend of 12 per cent. And the cotton industry is in a much better position still. The reduction in the output of cotton goods has probably not been more than 10 per cent."

Mr. Ichinomya, who is regarded as one of Japan's leading financial authorities, frankly admitted, as other experts did, that the present depression is due almost entirely to Japan's inability to hold the markets won during the war. All through the war money flowed in, industry boomed, shipping made exorbitant profits, and short-sighted investors believed that Japan had entered on the commercial millenium.

"Now," said Mr. Ichinomya, "they have to come down to earth. Some of us recognized, of course, that the boom could not last, and the banks consistently discouraged optimistic manufacturers from locking up capital in great extensions of plant and premises. Nevertheless, industry and society generally have remained on a false basis. Wages, which rose to unprecedented heights during the war, will have to come down ; State expenditure must be reduced to the mini-

mum; and if we are to hold our place in the markets of the world we must all look forward to a period of strict economy, hard work and earnest co-operation. Some governmental economies have already been effected, and when the new Budget is presented I am sure that there will be further cuts, including a reduction in the army vote. The Kato Cabinet is pledged to economy, and with the Luxury Tariff—unimportant in itself but psychologically significant—it hoisted the storm signal. I believe the people will respond, and I face the future with confidence."

Mr. Kushida, and other financiers and statesmen, told me the same thing. Japan, they said, was in for a period of hard work, severe economy and perhaps some hardship; but everywhere I found quiet confidence, a readiness to admit that mistakes have been made, and a determination to rectify them.

That Japan will ever again win prosperity so easily is not likely; but, on the other hand, I found it impossible to agree with several American business men who prophesied that Japan would continue to lose ground. They quoted figures, they emphasized,—in fact, over-emphasized—the inefficiency of the Japanese workman, and they dwelt on Japan's mistakes, which have been many. But they overlooked two vital factors—the dogged persistence of the Japanese and the irresistible force that drives them onward.

"Japan is going to beat all the other Powers in the race for China's trade," I heard a shrewd judge say in Peking; and he supported his conviction with the story of the dog that vainly chased the rabbit.

"You are faster than the rabbit," said his

friends when he returned. "You should have caught it."

"True," replied the dog, "but whereas I was running for my supper that rabbit was running for its life; and that makes all the difference."

And so it is with Japan. Some other countries can afford to slacken; Japan cannot. For good or ill she has joined in the march of the nations, and, though at times she may stumble, she cannot afford to lose step, much less drop out of the procession.

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### VI. A Chastened Spirit

I saw enough to convince me that there is a new spirit in Japan to-day. The jingoism, self-satisfaction and arrogance that lately tried the patience of the world have gone. In their place you find modesty, simple dignity, unfailing courtesy, a new respect for the opinions and rights of others, and a quiet, cheerful courage that even a hostile critic must find wholly admirable. For Japan has learned her lesson; and not, some think, before she needed it. The triumph over Russia in 1904–5 gave her a quite adequate idea of her strength in war; the obvious anxiety of the Allies to retain her friendship increased her self-importance; and on top of all this she found herself flourishing amazingly in the fields of commerce hitherto dominated by Britain, Germany and the United States. As all the active combatants grew thinner Japan grew fatter, and there is truth as well as malice in the gibe that the end of the war found her with a head as swollen as her purse.

Now the boom has collapsed like a pricked

bubble, and Japan, awakening from her dream of an inexhaustible supply of easy money, has had to come down to earth and set to work soberly and earnestly to save what she can from the ruins. The aggressiveness and cocksureness of a few years ago have vanished, and the Japanese to-day are anxious to learn rather than to teach, to co-operate rather than to bluster, to please rather than to make foes.

What the future may bring forth is beyond prophesy, but there is no doubt that Japan needs at least twenty years of peace, and in her present mood, desires peace indefinitely. I went to Japan, like most Australians, suspicious of her intentions in the Pacific and frankly prejudiced against her policy on the mainland of Asia—as well one might be, remembering Korea, Manchuria, Siberia, Saghalien and the long series of aggressions against China that culminated in the outrageous Twenty-One Demands.

I left Japan with a new appreciation of the country's difficulties and the conviction that Japanese statesmen and financiers were sincere when they told me that the country was thinking of nothing but peace. The time may come, of course, when pressure of population will force her to seek an outlet overseas, in which case she will do just what every other race has done—she will attempt to win new lands either by negotiation or by the sword. By that method Britain built up her Empire; even pacific America has not disdained it; and we can expect neither better nor worse from Japan. This being so, the sensible course is surely to accept assurances of present friendship while bearing in mind that some day Japan, without malice or long plan-

ning, may be forced by internal pressure to make a bid for the mastery of the Pacific.

Whatever the future may bring, Japan to-day is occupied with one problem and one only—the pursuit of her vanishing prosperity. When she re-establishes her industries on a sound basis and has thoroughly recovered from the earthquake and from her trade difficulties, then perhaps she will be in a position to think about war.

'But this trade development is in itself a factor making for peace. All the world knows that Japan is changing from an agricultural to a manufacturing country, but few seem to realize how far-reaching are the effects of this change on foreign policy. Twenty years ago, for instance, Japan might have thought it worth while going to war with America for the sake of the Philippines and Hawaii. But even if she could acquire those places to-day without losing a single man or a single yen, she might well hesitate to strike the blow. For Japan, now a manufacturing nation, cannot afford to forget that America is easily her best customer and has only to turn elsewhere to bring loss or unemployment to a million Japanese homes. There is such a thing as a trade war, of course; but I think there is logic in the assurance given me by leading Japanese business men that Japan would consider it madness to stake all on a doubtful appeal to the sword when she can safely develop markets in China, Manchuria and Siberia.

True, the value of China as a market is potential rather than actual, for the Chinese must increase their purchasing power, which means developing their own trade and resources, before they can become large consumers of Japanese

goods. But the potentialities of China are obviously immense; and Japan is in a better position than any other Power to take advantage of them.

At least three other factors have contributed to Japan's change of heart. One was the downfall of Germany, on whom Japan was inclined to model herself; another is the self-evident fact that it is quite possible to win a war and lose the peace that follows it; and the third is Japan's disillusionment about the value of colonies.

This last development, though it has attracted little attention, is particularly important. Japan, gazing enviously at Britain, once hugged the idea that if only she could acquire colonies an enormous increase in profit, prestige and power would almost automatically follow. Since then she has tried the experiment and it has not worked out as she expected. Mr. Ichinomya, the Tokyo banker whom I have already quoted, was quite frank on the subject.

"You Australians," he said with a smile, "are inclined to suspect that we have designs on your territory. But we haven't, for several reasons. For one thing, Japan's policy is one of peaceful trade expansion. Secondly, as some one recently pointed out in the British House of Commons, it would be tremendously difficult to carry on a campaign with lines of communication extending over some 6,000 miles. And, thirdly, we have been greatly disappointed with Korea. We have spent millions on improvements there, we have given the people public services that they did not have before, we have honestly tried to improve their condition, and still they are not satisfied. The trouble we have had with Korea has

forced us to the conclusion that colonies or dependencies acquired against their will are not worth the expenditure of effort, labour, life and money."

Assurances of Japan's friendship, gratitude and peaceful intentions towards Australia were also given me by several leading Japanese statesmen, including Baron Shidehara, the Foreign Minister.

"To suppose that we intend to attack Australia is silly," he said.

Words are only words, and no Minister, however sincere, can control events or the policy of his successors. History, moreover, has yet to reveal a single example of national altruism, and Japan is hardly likely to prove an exception. But still I believe that her protestations are genuine. An unbiassed visitor will come to the conclusion, I think, that Japan cherishes only the friendliest feelings towards Britain and the Dominions, and that, even though the future may bring conflict, there is no thought of it to-day.

And, after all, in international friendships that is as much as anyone can ask.

# CHAPTER XV

## THE HOME OF THE MANCHUS

Manchuria and its Railway—Russia's Short-lived Dream—A Wonderful Experiment—Amazing Harbin—Tchaikovsky and "Œdipus Rex"—A Night at a Cabaret—The most Tragic City in the World—Refugees' Pitiful Struggle—The Hospitable Russian—Girl Caddies and "Charlie Chaplin"—Duck Shooting on the Sungari—Some Comments, probably Unjust, on the Chinese.

FROM Japan you may reach Siberia either by boat from Tsuruga to Vladivostock, or by train through Korea and Manchuria. After a brief debate—not uninfluenced by the rough weather prevailing in the Sea of Okhotsk—I decided to go by train; and three days later I was again leaving Mukden, but this time bound north.

Next day we reached Chang-Chun, where the Japanese South Manchurian Railway ends and the Chinese Eastern begins; and half an hour later I was steaming northward on what is probably the finest train in the world. The sleepers were large, airy and comfortable, everything in the luxuriously-appointed dining-car shone like a new pin, the chairs reminded one of a first-class hotel, the waiters were spotless, and the attendants, with their epaulettes and braid and peaked caps, might have passed, but for their politeness, for Field-Marshals. The train was staffed entirely by Russians, for though the Chinese Eastern runs through Chinese territory, it was originally planned and

financed in Russia, and built by Russian engineers.

The Chinese Eastern Railway has a remarkable history. Thirty years ago, Manchuria was regarded as an extension of the great Gobi Desert, or, at best, as a waste given up to Chinese peasants and wandering Mongols.

Then, even before the completion of the great Trans-Siberian Railway, Russia began to turn her eyes south. She needed a port that would not, like Vladivostock, be ice-bound in winter, and for strategic reasons—for Japan's activity was already causing alarm—she badly wanted Korea. The agricultural and commercial possibilities of Manchuria itself were hardly realized. What Russia wanted was an approach to the China Sea.

It was scarcely possible for the Russian Government, as such, to build a line through the territory of another sovereign State, but this difficulty was got over by a little jugglery with names and figures. The Chinese Eastern Railway Company was formed to construct the line, with the Chinese Government retaining a half-share, and a Chinese as nominal chairman; and the money was advanced by the Russo-Asiatic Bank, which was in turn financed by the Russian Government. Just who financed the Russian Government is a matter on which the Soviet Government and the bondholders in Paris cannot agree.

By 1898 these preliminaries were satisfactorily arranged, and Petrograd gave the signal. One hundred and fifty thousand Cossacks were thrown across the frontier; a "temporary occupation" of Manchuria—which would certainly have been permanent but for the Russo-Japanese War—was established; and thousands of engineers and hundreds of thousands of Chinese and Korean coolies

began to work like ants. The temporary line was thrown down at a speed ranging up to three miles a day; and beside it was laid the permanent way over which the trains run to-day. The whole country was picketed by Cossack troops—wild, bearded fellows who terrified the Chinese by their atrocities; no foreigners were allowed in, and it was clear that Russia regarded Manchuria as her own special property.

Two lines were built—or, to be more precise, a trunk line through Harbin to Vladivostock, which brought the Pacific two days nearer Moscow than the Northern route of the Trans-Siberian had done; and a branch line running south to link up Mukden and Port Arthur. In 1901 the last section was finished, and it became possible to realize the dream that men had entertained for generations—to travel by rail all the way from Paris to Peking and Shanghai. It also became possible to rush troops from Moscow to Port Arthur in about eleven days.

The railway, as it happened, did not enable Russia to hold Port Arthur and dominate Korea; her army even had to evacuate Northern Manchuria. But the Treaty of Portsmouth left Russia her share in the Chinese Eastern north of Chang-Chun, and control of this great artery made it possible for her to establish a sphere of influence over Northern Manchuria. Thousands of Russian traders, civil servants and adventurers flocked in, a great trade in grain and soya beans sprang up, and towns began to rise as fast as the mushroom growths of the United States and Canada.

The chief of these was Harbin, the junction from which lines radiated north-west to Siberia, east to Vladivostock, and south to Mukden.

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CHINESE BANDITS AT HARBIN

Forty years ago, it is said, there was not a single Russian in Harbin. To-day there are probably 200,000, and perhaps 300,000 Chinese. And, thanks to the foresight of the Russian railway administration, it is laid out like no other great city in the whole of the Far East. The railway authorities provided parks, gardens, schools, hospitals, theatres, music, lighting and sanitation, and altogether successfully carried out one of the greatest experiments in paternal colonization ever attempted. The whole province boomed, and now, despite the handicap of brigandage, exports hundreds of thousands of tons of wheat, maize and soya beans.

Then came the change of government in Russia and the beginning of the dispute, which still goes on, as to whom the railway really belongs. Originally the Chinese Government had a half-share (since appropriated by Marshal Chang Tso-lin), and the Russo-Asiatic Bank, which was merely a dummy for the Russian Government, the other half. But the Russian Government borrowed the money from foreign capitalists, and the bonds, which mysteriously disappeared during the Revolution, recently turned up in Paris. Whether the present holders are the original lenders of the money, or whether (as the Soviet Government claims) the bonds were stolen, is rather doubtful; and the whole position is complicated by the fact that the Reds, having disclaimed all responsibility for Czarist debts abroad, could hardly expect to be handed over one of the old Government's few assets.

But the fact remains that they are in possession. Chang Tso-lin, who tried to seize the railway a year ago but was prevented by joint consular action,

recently recognized Moscow's claim, and it looks as if the Bolsheviks have re-established Russia's grip on north-eastern China and are in a position to snap their fingers at the bondholders in Paris.

The fact that the first step of the new administration was to arrest M. Boris Ostroumoff, the General Manager, and arrest or dismiss many of his "White" subordinates, is a pretty clear indication that the Bolsheviks, once in the saddle, mean to use the spur.

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## II. "The Paris of the East"

Harbin, youngest of all the cities of Asia, is also in many ways the strangest and most absorbing. Canton is probably the most typical of all China's cities, Shanghai is the largest and richest, and Peking, with its foreign legations and its unending round of glittering functions, is socially the most select. But Harbin has that most piquant of all assets—the charm of the unexpected.

If you look at the place on the map, you will see, I think, what I mean. You leave Peking on the thousand-mile journey north, and find a last small outpost of civilization in the foreign community of Mukden. Then the train is swallowed up in the vast emptiness of Manchuria. Rolling plains, covered with rank grass, stretch for hundreds of miles on either side of the line, with here and there a stretch of corn or beans; but, apart from the junction station of Chang-Chun, there is little sign of life beyond a few wretched villages and isolated houses, each protected by the loop-holed mud wall that tells its own story of brigandage and ceaseless menace.

Then comes Harbin, and you ask yourself can

this be really China. From the station you walk through trim gardens, with masses of flowers making brilliantly-coloured patterns against the background of the lawns. Dense dark-green foliage, cool and soothing to the eye, rises in the parks beyond. The streets are wide and fairly straight, though roughly cobbled. At least half the pedestrians are white. And, most astonishing of all, a goodly percentage of the women—cheaply dressed, but for the most part in admirable taste—might be tripping along a boulevard in Paris.

By night your wonder grows. Half the population seems to live by enticing the other half into restaurants, whose character ranges all the way from doubtful to villainously bad ; pictures of Miss Constance Talmadge and Douglas Fairbanks catch your eye on the hoardings ; and, to prove that you must be dreaming, an acquaintance volunteers the information that here, in the heart of this wilderness of Manchuria, you can either dance at one of half a dozen cabarets, clubs and dance halls, or attend the nightly concert given in the Railway Club garden by fifty first-rate Russian professionals —" a splendid Tchaikovsky programme to-night," he tells you—or see a Russian play at the New Theatre.

" Or if you care to wait until to-morrow night," he adds carelessly, as a final touch, " you can go along to the Railway Gardens and see *Tzar Edip* —otherwise Sophocles' *Œdipus Rex*."

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I tried them all. In the beautiful Railway Gardens, beneath a silver moon, I listened for two hours to the most glorious interpretation of Tchaikovsky that had fallen within my experience ; and at the

same place on the following Sunday evening, on the open-air stage amidst the trees, I saw Œdipus played by a Russian who, if majesty of presence, dramatic power and golden resonance of voice count for anything, is surely one of the world's great actors.

Then, by way of contrast, I visited a certain cabaret called " The Pompeii "—Harbin's substitute for, let us say, the Moulin Rouge. Here, in a rather dingy cellar, I found fifty or sixty revellers seated around a dance floor. It was a dance floor of the sort that makes sitting-out a pleasure: a serried horror which rose and fell like the surface of a troubled sea, and (for this was a far, far worse floor than any I had ever seen before) was covered with worn-out linoleum.

There were Americans in this strange assembly; a few Germans, bullet-headed and bristly-haired; some swarthy, dark-eyed fellows, of what nationality I could not guess, with unforced merriment in their flashing smiles, glasses ever ready to their hands, and an air of being at home that none of the others quite attained; four Japanese, smiling, urbane, and rapidly getting drunk; and a party of Chinese, still and expressionless, who surveyed that garish scene with the air of ancient gods looking down from the Upper Air, with passionless contemplation, upon the vanities and follies of mankind.

A curious place withal, this threadbare cabaret in a tragic town. The manager, evidently of a historical turn, invited you in his advertisements to " Come back to the times of Ceaser," and hospitably added, " Open 24 hours daily." (This last claim, as I learned later, was very grossly exaggerated. The establishment was closed between

breakfast and lunch.) The walls were decorated with paintings—classical in subject but somewhat futurist in execution—that would have staggered even the " Ceaser " of Theodor Mommsen's idolatry ; and to complete a picture that Petronius would have loved, the waitresses and dancers, who ranged in type from the obviously flirtatious to the astonishingly sedate, wore the sandals and flowing garments of Ancient Rome.

The rest of the entertainment was quite up-to-date. A dance orchestra played fox-trots with the speed of one-steps, and one-steps faster than human feet could move ; a vaudeville troupe sang songs about the good old days, and satirized Trotsky, Karakhan and other Red leaders, to the huge delight of the exiles ; and everybody except the smiling Japs and the waxen-faced Chinese danced and drank and sang anti-Bolshevik choruses with tremendous vigour and gusto. The words of the songs I could not understand, but from the shining eyes and parted lips of the refugees, the fervour with which they shouted their approval, and the bursts of excited laughter that greeted every witticism, it was plain enough that they sneered at the Reds and praised the old régime which every exile fondly and vaguely hopes to see restored.

And so the night wore on, the whites getting jollier and the Japs drunker, till the lights went out because there was no further need of them, and every one trooped upstairs, tired and suddenly dispirited, as is the way on such occasions, into the cold Harbin dawn.

When I last saw them, a few Americans were desperately trying to be gay, the Japs were laughing idiotically because one of them, in essaying

the difficult feat of entering a carriage, had twice missed the step ; and the Chinese, waiting patiently for a vehicle, were standing with that curious stillness and odd air of seeing nothing and yet everything, which are the characteristics of their race and Madame Tussaud's.

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### III. Waifs of the Storm

The world heard much about the great flight from Southern Russia after the collapse of Denikin ; and conditions in the ports of refuge, more especially Constantinople, must have been horrible enough. But I am told that there are not more than 3,000 or 4,000 Russians in Constantinople now. The rest have gradually dispersed, and found some sort of home in the great capitals and amongst the Slav peoples of central and southern Europe.

But in China, more especially in Harbin and Shanghai, the problem of the refugees grows more and more heartrending. There has been some talk recently of repatriating them, and an agreement was actually arrived at between the Soviet and Chinese Governments whereby the former promised all " Whites " free entry and future immunity. But when the first contingent of refugees from Shanghai reached the Siberian border they were callously turned back ; and there, when I left Harbin, they still were, without money, food or even shelter. What became of them God knows, but it is safe to say that they received no assistance from Moscow. Though the Civil War has been over for years, the Reds still pursue the White refugees with implacable bitterness, and do every-

thing possible to prevent these broken men and women from earning a humble living in an alien land. When the recent Treaty between China and Russia was under discussion the Soviet delegates insisted that the Chinese Government should dismiss all the White Russians in its employ, and Dr. Wellington Koo, to his everlasting shame, weakly and meanly assented.

Harbin, I should think, is the most tragic city in the world. Other places, of course, actually suffered the ravages of war, and Harbin did not. But in Harbin you find something worse than ruins and sad memories. There all the ugly things of war—starvation, misery, prostitution and crime—still endure like festering sores. Hungry and desperate men have taken to the highway, and lurk in dark streets for unwary pedestrians. Thousands of Russian refugees never know where their next meal will come from, or whether it will come at all. Old men who once held their heads high whine for pennies in the streets. Little ragged children, with noses glued to the hotel windows, watch every mouthful you eat. And countless Russian girls have taken to the streets, or gone to live with Chinese, or sold themselves to Japanese houses in Korea or Japan.

Others have found, and are still finding, a quicker and perhaps a pleasanter death where the yellow waters of the Sungari flow down to the Amur and the sea.

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The tragedy of Harbin dates back to the time when Semionov, Ungern von Sternburg (the " Mad Baron "), Kolchak and the rest of the anti-Bolshevik adventurers collapsed, and hundreds of panic-

stricken Whites fled across the border into the Chinese province of Manchuria.

There they found some sort of sanctuary from the Reds, but otherwise their plight was still desperate. The railway was rushed by panic-stricken hordes, trains and trucks packed with men, women and children stood for days at wayside stations; and numbers of these trapped fugitives, unable to go forward, unwilling to go back, starved or froze to death where they lay.

And this was only one phase of the great flight south. Long before the appalling climax thousands of White families had reached China by train, or, in the case of the troops, had fled across the border into Manchuria or Mongolia to escape the Red tide sweeping East. Many of those who had a little money went to America. A large percentage—perhaps 100,000—are still living in Harbin. Somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 are in Shanghai. The others are scattered up and down Asia from the sailors' dens of Kobe to the harems of Urga, that desolate home of the Living Buddhas, and from the Siberian border to the gambling hells of Saigon, in Cochin-China.

Some of the men have been able to find honest though ill-paid work. There is a little tobacco stall in Harbin run by a former colonel. Your cab may be driven by a cavalryman who had no other asset than his horse. And every day, as I sat in the lounge of the hotel, I used to see a tall, erect young man, shabby and yet rakishly distinguished, walk into the hotel with a sheaf of newspapers under his arm and walk out swinging a home-made stick with an unmistakable military swagger.

Few of the women have been so lucky. Throughout the East all work in homes and shops is done

by Chinese for a wage of about five shillings a week, and in competition with them these Russian women had little chance of employment. Some were lucky enough to marry foreigners. Others obtained work as typists, waitresses, cabaret artists and so on. At the hotel where I stayed there were three employed as waitresses. One was the daughter of a general, one the daughter of a doctor, and one the daughter of a teacher. There was a notice in the hotel that neither these girls nor any other employee received wages. They worked from eleven to fourteen hours a day, and depended solely on tips, which averaged fifteen shillings a week. On this sum one of them, a widow, had to support herself and a baby.

Such girls are regarded as lucky in Harbin, and go in terror of losing their positions. Those who were not so lucky chose what is not only the easiest but the only way, and threw themselves on the market. Some fell in with white men ; they were comparatively lucky. The less fortunate or less fastidious—for the lower-class Russian does not draw the colour line as rigidly as an Anglo-Saxon —married, or more commonly were purchased by, well-to-do Chinese merchants and soldiers, or the White Slavers of Japan.

It is easy to condemn them. I found more than one Anglo-Saxon who sneered at the refugees for their weakness of fibre, and their inability to stand up against the bludgeonings of Fate. And much that they said was true, as is proved by the Russian's spiritless submission to the Chinese. Every day I witnessed or heard of some fresh case of Chinese tyranny over the Russians—of men being beaten by police in the streets, or locked up for days without trial ; and I wondered how long

even 1,000 Anglo-Saxons would have suffered such treatment without taking charge of the town or dying in the attempt.

It is easy, too, to sympathize with the bitter lament of the other races that the Russian has finally destroyed the prestige of the white in China and gone a long way towards making life intolerable.

" Once," an American from Chang-Chun told me, " my wife could go anywhere and receive nothing but respect. Now we are insulted in the street, and either have to motor or stay indoors."

It may all be true, but that does not make the plight of the refugees less pitiable. The fall of the Russian woman in China may be very inconvenient and annoying to the other white races ; but it is none the less a tragedy for her.

" The other day," an Englishman told me, " I saw a Russian girl, without shoes or stockings, coming out of the servants' quarters next door. Knowing that the owners were away I asked my head boy for an explanation. ' You must not be angry with her, master,' he replied. ' She is a very poor girl and lives with the Chinese cook for the sake of a little food.' "

Is it any wonder that some prefer the river ?

The horror of it all is deepened when you realize that some of these men and women who have fallen so low in Harbin were once amongst the flower of Russia's intellect, beauty and culture. Many an honoured name has been dragged through the mud of Harbin's streets or down into the " dope " dens and criminal haunts of the " Green Bazaar."

Harbin is not all gloom, of course. Its drama is almost as amazing as its music, and, as I have

said, there are any number of cabarets where the foreigner and any young Russian who can get together a few dollars may drink, sing and dance till dawn. But beneath the superficial gaiety there is always the sombre note. Harbin dances, but it is a *danse macabre*, with the skeleton's bones always rattling beneath the motley.

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## IV. Sport on the Sungari

The Russians of Harbin are like Russians the world over—the soul of hospitality. They love to see every chair around the dinner-table occupied, press upon you dish after dish heaped high with their favourite delicacies, expect you to gulp down three or four glasses of fiery vodka before beginning to drink, and keep Chinese boys running around with the wine bottle until every one is approaching a state of anecdotal intoxication.

There are few Anglo-Saxons in Harbin, but each and every one I met, British or American, was charming. They asked me to their homes, where in three cases I found a Russian wife, arranged parties for the dance halls, and took me golfing and shooting.

The golf course—another amazing feature of this amazing city—was new, and the greens were so fast and bumpy that, what with this and natural incompetence, I ended with an atrocious average of three putts to the green and only once in three rounds broke ninety. But after the stifling heat of the tropics and Japan it was good to be alive in that brisk autumn sunshine ; and I found endless enjoyment in the caddies—little Russian girls, sweet, brown-faced, bare-legged elves who marked the ball with the eye of a hawk, jabbered approval

and disappointment in excited Russian, and apparently took quite an interest in my moustache. They were all very poor, of course, but not too poor, it seemed, to see the films occasionally. When I walked out with my clubs after the last round, and with real regret called " Good-bye " to the youngsters crowding around the car, there came an echoing chorus, " Do suedania, Charlee Chaplin."

Then two young Englishmen took me duck-shooting on the Sungari.

" Manchuria," cried one of them enthusiastically, " is the sportsman's paradise—bear, whopping great Mongolian tigers, and more geese, duck and snipe than you can carry home. We haven't been out this year yet, but last year there were millions. Are you on ? "

I was.

We packed hampers that night, took two dogs and a modest hundred rounds each, embarked in a motor launch at midnight while couples danced on the balcony of the Yacht Club near by, and set off up the river. The idea was that we should sleep till dawn, and then massacre the duck, snipe and quail that rose (so I was assured) like locusts from the swamps and maize fields.

Almost from the beginning I had a premonition that I was not going to enjoy that trip. I have no objection to sleeping on bare and uneven boards. I don't mind if a dog affectionately paws my face and then, when I open my lips to protest, licks my mouth. But I do not like mosquitoes.

I hinted as much—tactfully, you understand—to my hosts.

" Try kerosene," they suggested.

I tried kerosene ; and to make a job of it, I used

petrol as well. But to the full-blooded mosquitoes of the Sungari kerosene and petrol are merely aperitifs which sharpen their appetite and spur them on to fresh and incredible exertions. My friends slept, the dogs slept, and I fancy the Chinese at the helm must have slept too. At all events it was not for a couple of hours that he discovered that the row-boat had slipped its fastening and vanished into the night. But there was one passenger who remained acutely and hideously awake, and I need hardly say it was I.

The blackness of the night gave way to a cold grey; and then in the east there came the first faint streaks of colour. This was the signal we were waiting for. The Chinese ran our bow on to a sloping bank, and at four o'clock we sprang ashore, each heartening the other with promises of the bag to come and trying feebly to mask his yawn behind the brisk alertness proper to a hunter.

"All ready?" cried our leader, with what heartiness he could assume. "Well, let's get at 'em." And he plunged into rank grass four feet high while we stumbled behind.

The grass was sopping. In ten paces we were wet; in a minute we were drenched, and in ten minutes our shirts were clinging clammily to our sides and the water was squelching from our boots.

A crane rose ponderously and flapped his way slowly past in the chilly half-light of the Manchurian autumn morning; and five minutes later I saw perhaps ten brace of duck get up from a lagoon on our right and drop again near by. But our leader strode on without turning from his course, and, concluding that ten brace were not reckoned worth bothering about in these parts, I

kept in line and said nothing. (Later I learned that he did not see them.)

I saw the others crouch and creep forward, and followed suit.

"Lagoons!" called our leader quietly.

"Lagoons!" hissed my nearest neighbour, passing on the word to me.

"Lagoons!" I said to myself with a spurt of optimism. And I pushed forward the safety catch, loosened a couple of cartridges ready for reloading when the duck darkened the sky, and, simultaneously with the others, straightened my back and peered over the top of the rushes at the still and stagnant water.

For a minute we stared incredulously at the lagoon; then we stared at each other; and then, a little heavily, we moved on.

"Never known this before: last year there were millions," said our guide.

This was at 4.30. By six we had walked through miles of tall wet grass, and skirted maize crops higher than our heads, and stumbled past two or three isolated shanties which peasants, staring with open mouths and sunken eyes, were leaving for their day's work with hoe and scythe; and by 6.30 our guide had become separated from us by a field of maize, and had disappeared.

Half an hour later two flat, empty reports were borne down on the breeze that sighed across these desolate plains.

"Sounds cheery," cried my companion. "He seems to have put something up."

"Or blown his brains out," I observed, as the water trickled down my neck and out of my boots.

"He would hardly need both barrels," observed my companion reflectively. "Still," he added,

"there *were* duck here last year—and snipe. Millions of them!"

At eight o'clock we returned to the boat. Five minutes later our missing friend arrived without his birds, and we all sat down to a morose breakfast. With the coffee our guide brightened.

"There's a creek near here," he said, "which leads to a place where there are *always* quail and snipe. We can't miss them."

We pushed off again, chugged two or three miles up the river—or was it down?—threaded our way up a narrow creek or backwater, and stepped ashore just as a thin, drizzling rain set in. Not that the rain mattered. We were long past caring.

For two more hours we tramped through sodden fields and ferny banks. Three times the dogs put up a quail in front of the man on my right; twice I heard shots on my left; but I never saw a bird. Then we plodded back towards the boat.

Then came a sudden whir of wings, and a quail shot up almost from under my feet. Just whose bird it was I don't know; but I woke from my coma with the report of a gun in my ears and saw a wisp of grey smoke drifting from the muzzle of my gun. It was years since I had shot much, but habits, once fixed, cling well.

"Your bird," said the man on my right with a grin, as he threw something towards me.

I saw a shapeless mass of blood and feathers which fell to pieces in my hand; and suppressing the words that rose to my lips, I tossed aside this sole trophy of six hours' wading through a sea of grass and water and stepped with dignity into the boat.

Our guide seated himself in the bow and

gazed reminiscently across those dismal marshes. "There were millions," he said, "last year . . ."

* * * * *

## V. Illustrating the Unwisdom of Generalizing

For months, alternately attracted by their "slickness" and humour, and repelled by their cruelty and greed, I had been undecided about the Chinese. In Harbin I made up my mind, and, with certain reservations, the verdict was not flattering.

There was a time when I liked the Chinese. Their industry was a thing to marvel at, though scarcely to imitate ; they were civil, good-natured, peaceable and singularly honest ; and the fact that they were often the butt of hoodlums made me like them the more. What they were like at home I did not know ; but I had a vague notion, fostered by lady novelists, that they were a gentle, long-suffering, kindly people, dwelling in poverty, dirt and ignorance, but exhibiting, in spite of it all, the manners and instincts of what the same ladies would describe as Nature's gentlemen.

Then I went to China. I travelled amongst Chinese from Hong-Kong to Harbin, and mixed with all classes from Oxford-educated statesmen to illiterate coolies ; and one by one my illusions vanished. I am still prepared to admit that the Chinese gentleman can be charming ; but his charm is almost invariably the result of a Western polish. The masses, the real Chinese, are almost everything that one instinctively detests.

To begin with, their courtesy is a myth. What most people mistake for it—though the impoverished Russians of Harbin and Shanghai know better—is that very inferior substitute, a hypo-

critical servility. As long as he has something to gain by it, the average Chinese will bow and grovel and "master" and "sir" you to the point of nausea. Your house boy, your room boy at the hotel, the shopkeeper who is trying to sell you a curio—each is amiability itself. And it is only fair to say that the service he gives you in return for his wage is really wonderful. For a total of 35*s.* a week you can engage three servants who (always providing that they are carefully watched) will do the work of cook, waiters, valets, charwomen, washer-women and messengers, and attend to your slightest wish for twenty-four hours a day. No matter what hour you reach home, a call of "boy" —all Chinese servants are addressed as "boy," unless they happen to be head waiters, in which case you call them "Number One"—brings an instant response and prompt and uncomplaining attention.

The average house boy, moreover, is astonishingly honest. By which I mean that he will leave your money and valuables strictly alone and content himself with robbing you, as is the ancient and honourable custom in the East, in each and every one of your household accounts.

But eliminate the prospect of gain, and the lower-class Chinese, especially the Cantonese variety, is an insolent lout who understands and respects two things and two only—money and the whip. Courtesy is interpreted as weakness, and generosity is a manifestation of folly of which he instantly tries to take advantage. As for chivalry, he has not the faintest idea of the meaning of the word, and would think you were mad if you tried to explain.

And on top of his other unlovable characteristics, the Southern Chinese has acquired a badly swollen

head. Since the Chinese Seamen's Union won a great shipping strike in Hong-Kong three years ago, and the people began to absorb Bolshevism and notions of race equality through the Chinese newspapers, the Cantonese has begun to believe, like a true Red democrat, that he is not only as good as the white man, but better.

You see this reflected in a hundred ways. I had five minutes' rather heated argument with half a dozen money-changers in Canton, and had to threaten violence to the person of the most objectionable of them—if one could be said to be more objectionable than the rest—before I could get either the right change or my money back. Even in the leading Hong-Kong hotel, under British management, you find waiters who lean against the wall while you give an order and stroll away without indicating whether they will demean themselves by serving you. If you inquire why they are not instantly kicked or discharged, you will be told that since the seamen's strike, which ultimately extended, through intimidation, to every industry, and even to house servants, the Europeans have been afraid of provoking another general strike. The astute yellow man has perceived this fear, and naturally takes the utmost advantage of it.

But the average Chinese has worse faults than incivility. He is, for instance, one of the filthiest beings on earth—quite as filthy as savages who have not a tenth of his intelligence and no pretence to civilization. By this I do not mean merely that he washes inadequately and seldom, for there he is not much worse than the peasantry in many another land. What I mean is that he likes, not ordinary dirt, but filth. He has no idea of sanita-

tion, thinks nothing of spitting in your soup if you offend him, and grows vegetables in a fashion that would turn even Bernard Shaw to roast beef. Even the prosperous class who stay at a fairly costly Chinese hotel soon reduce bedrooms and bathrooms, as I discovered one horrible night in Canton, to a condition that a European finds disgusting ; and they have other little habits that one prefers not to think about.

A trick—shared by the Japanese—of spitting noisily and continuously is amongst the least objectionable of Chinese idiosyncrasies. They spit anywhere and everywhere, all day and most of the night. And the worst of it is that, unlike the American tobacco-chewer, they are not accurate spitters. When I first reached the East I wondered at the enormous size of the spittoons. Later I regretted that these useful but not particularly ornamental vessels were not larger.

You must not suppose that this applies only to the coolie. Staying at my hotel in Harbin was a general of sorts, complete with harem, progeny and bodyguard ; and a grosser and more horrible brute could not possibly be imagined. But he was by no means exceptional. An American, a former consul, told me that every time he was compelled to invite Chinese officials to dinner his carpets were made filthy and his wallpaper ruined.

There are many other things to dislike about the Chinese. He has not the faintest notion of honesty as we understand the term, and never does anything without looking for a "squeeze." He is quite animal in his materialism and lusts. And worst of all is his cruelty. When a pig is being killed every one in the vicinity will gather to watch the long-drawn-out performance. Boys think it

great fun to torture a cat or pull a butterfly to pieces. The Chinese teamster flogs his horses even when they are pulling well, just for the fun of it ; and God help them if the vehicle is bogged ! The bandit with an unsatisfactory prisoner makes quite a holiday of his attempt at " persuasion " ; and the condition of the poor wretches in most Chinese prisons—and in Manchuria they include some Russians—is indescribable. Orphan children—the rest are mostly treated well, unless they happen to be unwanted girls, who are liable to be killed at birth —are still sold into slavery as they were a hundred centuries ago. And, what is worse, some are systematically maimed in order that they may practise as beggars.

All Chinese do not do these things, of course—possibly because some are kind, possibly because the demand for maimed beggars is not unlimited, and in China one cannot afford to waste too much time in idle pleasure. But a large proportion of the race seems to be tinged with sadism, and even those who are personally guiltless can witness without emotion things that make a European shudder and turn away. In spite of all our talk of the universal brotherhood of man, the Chinese is still separated from the White by an unbridgeable gulf, and, for all the antiquity of his civilization, retains much of the brutishness of the savage without the savage's primitive virtues.

And yet, as I have said in an earlier chapter, the epic of Mary Watson is also the epic of the humble yellow labourer who lived like a Chinese and died like a gentleman. Which proves that the Chinese is not the least curious being in a very curious world, and incidentally demonstrates the value of generalities.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE LAND OF MYSTERY

The Forbidden Land—I Find Myself in Luck—Sidelights on Siberia—Chita—Trains Wrecked by "Whites"—The Kindly Jew—A Home on Wheels—The Restaurant Keeper's Story—The World's Greatest Railway—The Land of Promise.

ANYONE who lightheartedly decides to visit Russia is liable to sudden disillusionment; and the difficulties are increased if you make your approach, as I did, from the East. There are Soviet representatives in several cities in China, but only M. Karakhan, the Russian Ambassador and Plenipotentiary in Peking, has power to grant visas without consulting Moscow; and even in Peking there are endless formalities. An application has to be made out in quadruplicate and supported by four photographs, and anything from three weeks to three months usually elapses before Moscow looks you up in the records and decides for or against you.

All this I learned from a friend with whom I had discussed my plans.

"Going to Russia?" he said. "Well, there's no harm in optimism. But what makes you think you can get in?"

"Why shouldn't I get in?" I demanded.

"That's not the point. There are people in Peking who applied for visas three months ago and

more. And they're still waiting. So if you have no special pull . . ."

With spirits somewhat damped, I made out my application, sought a scholarly Russian exile in a warren of dirty alleys, and had it translated for a guinea. Then I visited the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Mission of the Union of Russian Socialist Soviet Republics, interviewed M. Lebedeff, the courteous secretary, and presented my application, together with a letter on which I built some hopes. This was a recommendation from Mr. Tom Walsh—in public the revolutionary leader of the Australian Seamen's Union; in private the husband of Adela Parkhurst, a gentle, kindly and hospitable man, proud of his babies and his books.

"Mr. Dixon," he wrote, "is by no means a Communist, but quite a good fellow; and he is determined to tell the truth about Russia."

I was received with a courtesy which I found characteristic of all Russians, White or Red. The rule was, I am told, that all applications should go to Moscow, but M. Karakhan himself would go into the merits of my case and give his decision promptly.

M. Karakhan—the black-bearded, black-eyed, eagle-nosed Armenian who spent some years in a Siberian prison and is now the Soviet's chief representative in the Far East—was as good as his word, and my passport, with the necessary visa, was returned to me in the space of three days.

All this was settled a month before, and here I was in Harbin, tolerably sure of getting into Russia, but uncertain whether, as every one cheerfully prophesied, I would lose my golf clubs, camera, typewriter and (possibly) some of my

clothes. In Peking no one could tell me what day one should cross the border to pick up the Trans-Siberian Express ; and even here in Harbin most people were very vague about travelling conditions once the border was crossed. All that I could learn from the booking-office were the facts, not especially cheering, that the first-class fare was about £30, and that for all luggage in excess of 70 lb. I would be charged about 3*s*. for every 10 lb.

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**II. Sidelights on Siberia**

The one exception was an American engineer, middle-aged, burly and jovial, who had just returned to Harbin after a ten months' sojourn in Northern Siberia. Month after month, in a little mining village in the frozen north, he had lain on his back with a broken leg, waiting patiently for the bones, crudely set by himself, to mend. And while he lay there he studied the queer folk around him and picked up the impressions which he retailed to me later with all the shrewdness and slangy humour of his race.

"I went into some queer places and lived amongst Reds, Whites, Yellows and all sorts of mezzotints," he told me. "Pretty tough, some of them were. In one place I used to sleep on the floor between a Red killer and a guy who'd been an I.W.W. gunman in Chicago. I've seen some bad men out in the West in the old days—men who were reckoned pretty quick on the draw ; but believe me, none of them had anything on this Russky and his offsider. Scared of them ? Hell, no. They were my friends, 'faithful and just to me,' as your Shakespeare says : and besides "—

he gave a throaty chuckle and ordered another bottle—" it paid them better to go straight than it would have to cut my throat."

He spoke Russian quite well, and had studied the character and institutions of the Siberian peasantry very closely.

" In many ways things haven't changed so much," he said. " The peasant is still chronically hard up ; and the priests, long-haired and unwashed, still wander around and smell as bad as ever, which was some. But if the Reds have done nothing else they've certainly made the people work. In the old days no one really worked in Russia except the peasant, and he only worked at sowing and harvest times. Now everybody has to toe the mark. Men, women and children are kept under observation, every town and village is infested with officials, and bureaucracy is worse than ever. Officials honestly do their best—they have to, for each watches the other like a cat and knows that he is being spied on in turn—but they work such long hours in some of these Siberian places that they always seem half doped. Even in the Czarist days there were millions of forms to fill in for all possible occasions ; and the Reds have added a lot more. Consequently officials spend their days and nights climbing over mountains of paper and are far too busy exchanging memos in triplicate to get anything done."

I asked him whether he thought there was much corruption.

" In my deals I didn't find a great deal amongst the ordinary rank and file, though now and then a little sweetening didn't do any harm to speak of," he told me. " But there's a fair amount of graft in the semi-official co-operative societies and the

State shops. Their accounts are conducted on a system that would whiten our hair, the directors have plenty of chances to cook them, and I guess some of them take all the chances they're offered. But they can't keep it up for ever. The Central Government keeps a tight hold on the reins, commissions of investigation are sent out periodically, and, when the news comes through that a party has left Moscow, men in Vladivostock turn pale and begin beating it for Manchuria or Japan. Pretty slick, some of these Red officials are. The way they keep tag on everybody is surely wonderful. When a White refugee returns, for example, they ask him to sit down and fill in forms setting forth his family history and the whole darned story of his life. When he's finished they pull a card from the file and show him his real history. If the two versions differ much he's in for trouble. If not, they let him go with a caution. And while he sits there they photograph him through secret holes in the wall from three different angles. Now don't you call that cute ? "

Like every other engineer, the American had a profound contempt for the inefficiency of the average Russian.

" Everywhere you go, and in every line of business, you find the same ignorance, muddle and waste," he told me. " All the State shops and co-operatives are living on Government credits, and even though they have no competition to speak of, I doubt whether there's one that is paying. But that has always been the Russian's way. Take the Chinese Eastern Railway, for instance. The C.E.R. is one of the great railroads of the world, but it never made any money. The railway drew on the Russo-Asiatic Bank, the Bank drew

on Petrograd and Petrograd was supposed to draw on God, though the Frenchies said it drew on Paris. And these co-operatives, I guess, are run on the same pleasing business principles."

I mentioned Siberia's mines, and thought the engineer would weep. He assured me, as every one else did, that the gold mines in the Lena valley had gone to pieces since the Reds took over, that (apart from depreciation and flooding) they were heavily in debt, and that there was probably not one big mine in the country that was showing a reasonable profit.

But of the country's potentialities and future, given good government, he had no doubt whatever.

" Siberia," he said, " is one of the most glorious countries on the face of the globe, and if it were owned by anyone but the Russians it would soon hold 50 millions of people and take its place amongst the great nations of the world. The Reds whine about their poverty and their inability to provide certain public services and pay their debts. Give me (or any man who knows his job) control of the mines and the return from this source alone would pay off Russia's entire indebtedness inside twenty years. But as things are . . ."

He shook his head despondently and called for another drink with the air of a man who badly needed it.

* * * * *

### III. Past the Barrier

The Trans-Siberian Express runs once a week, and to catch it at Chita you must leave Harbin on a Thursday evening. At seven o'clock the train for Siberia steamed out, and I went to sleep that night

with excitement in my heart and bugs in my narrow bunk.

It is a dull journey from Harbin to the frontier town of Manchuli—a bleak expanse of rolling plains sparsely cultivated, with here and there a few horses or a herd of cattle grazing on the coarse rank grass. Apart from Chalantun, a popular holiday resort for Harbin people, I saw nothing to relieve the monotony of that vast and dreary waste.

About four o'clock in the afternoon we pulled into Manchuli, and along with some hundreds of others, nearly all of them Russians, I found myself in an evil-smelling hall, where the luggage was being searched by blue-shirted Reds.

Trouble developed early. A Russian customs officer in the employ of the Chinese Government warned me that I would have to pay duty on my typewriter and clubs, and prophesied that, even if my camera were passed there, it would be confiscated later. I pointed out that the camera and typewriter were to me what pick and shovel were to a workman—an argument that seemed to impress the pleasant young official—and I was led into the bare wooden room of the officer in charge.

There, while awaiting my turn, I watched the little comedies and dramas of the examinations. A man protested against the confiscation of his silver money, but without the slightest effect. An elderly official wanted to know why one agitated woman had so much silken underwear, and, dangling intimate garments in mid-air, peered at them through his glasses. And another official, clad in the blue shirt, belt and high leather boots which I was later to see everywhere, ruthlessly ripped open the rotund stomach of a doll, and extracted contraband silk, while a child wept a

piteous protest and the smuggler uneasily awaited developments.

At last my turn came. Three officials conferred and argued, I heard several allusions to "Australia" and "correspondent," and the elderly man consulted bulky regulations. He seemed to have grave doubts about the clubs, asked their purpose, pulled a brassey out of the bag, and waggled it in quite the wrong style.

"Try the overlapping grip," I suggested flippantly. But he took no notice, weighed all the articles, announced that I would have to pay duty, argued with his comrades again, announced that I would not have to pay duty, and finally handed over everything, together with a note warning later examiners that if they took away my camera "it might create a bad impression and be bad for the Business"—"the Business" being the usual term for the Communist cause.

Two hours after we arrived the last formalities were over, and the train for Chita steamed out. We crossed the border at the shambling little village of Poklevsky just as dusk was falling over this land of mystery and sad story, and I realized, not without a little thrill of anticipation, that one of my lifelong dreams was coming true. The nine-day journey across Siberia had begun.

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## IV. Chita

When I opened my eyes next morning we were leaving the great Manchurian plain and running into a land of rolling hills and timbered steppes. Wild flowers, the last survivors of the wonderful Siberian autumn, made bright patches of colour beside the line ; and the clear water of the Ingoda

River sparkled in the sunshine. Once in a way we passed a few log huts built, for protection against the bitter winds of winter, in the shadow of some hill ; and I saw here and there a few shaggy cattle and horses grazing on the rain-sodden flats. And then in the early afternoon, we ran into the outskirts of a town.

A few minutes later we pulled into Chita, formerly capital of the short-lived Far Eastern Republic. Here we learned that a goods train had been wrecked between Vladivostock and Chita —the fifth outrage of the kind committed by outlaw " White " bands within a month—and that as a result the Express would be delayed. How long ? The station-master shook his head and returned a stolid " nees nyo " to all our questions. It might be nine o'clock. Or ten. Or perhaps midnight. Who could tell ?

Some of the passengers fumed, but I rejoiced, for the delay gave me a chance to wander about the gaunt and shabby little town.

Chita is a place of dark and sighing pines, picturesque log cabins, and here and there a decaying relic of the sombre past, including the 150-year-old wooden church, beside which many a famous exile lies buried. Built on the rolling steppes, on the very edge of the melancholy forest, Chita was once quite a flourishing little town, but everywhere I saw signs of poverty and decay. The leading hotel, burned by the retreating " Whites," was still a ruin ; not one building, I was told, had been erected since the revolution ; the roofs and walls of some of the poorer dwellings were falling in or leaning drunkenly ; the street surfaces remained what they had always been—bare sand and mud ; and the lighting was so bad, partly owing to the

continual stealing of electric bulbs, that movement after dark was neither easy nor safe. All the larger shops had been "nationalised"—that is, confiscated by the Soviet—and business was obviously at a standstill. In all Chita there were only two smoking chimneys. Some of the shops were closed. Others—dirty little weatherboard places displaying cheap clothes or stale food—were open, but doing little business. Shopkeepers who lounged at the door and watched youngsters throwing stones at a wretched cur; the unemployed, in their crude, bulky straw boots and sheepskin jackets, standing sullenly at the corners; the Koreans squatting with their backs against the club building provided by the Government; the gangs of ragged urchins and youths, professional pickpockets so I was warned, who followed us about the streets and begged for money—all these told their own story of drift and stagnation.

Before the revolution Chita did quite a profitable business in timber, and a mill with an up-to-date plant was erected. But it was the old story. The property was seized by the Bolsheviks, the foreigner lost his money, and the Russians lost the trade. Even the little cutting that was going on was being badly muddled. Owing to a heavy tax on each log brought down above a certain size, the cutters were felling all the smaller trees and thereby ruining the forest.

There was, I found, only one hotel in Chita which was regarded as possible; and that was an ugly and insanitary place which, owing to some Government ban, was unable to serve meals. I wandered around the dark and muddy streets until I found some sort of eating-house, had the usual mess—meat and cabbage stewed together—and then set

off in the darkness to find the station, which, following the best Siberian precedents, is at least half a mile from the centre of the town.

By this time it was eleven o'clock and the station was crowded. There were scores of peasants wearing sheepskin coats and carrying their belongings in dirty bundles. My fellow passengers from China, including a Chinese attaché bound for Copenhagen and two Bolshevik couriers—pleasant fellows who had volunteered to assist me in any difficulty—were waiting impatiently for the Express. And a detachment of Red soldiers, nearly all with the broad cheekbones and narrow, slanting eyes that indicate Mongol blood, sipped hot milk and swaggered up and down.

The stars came out, the cold air nipped sharply, and one had to choose between shivering on the platform or stifling in reeking waiting-rooms where moujiks snored and soldiers, with loaded rifles by their sides, sprawled on benches, baggage counters and the bare stone floor. One o'clock came and went . . . two . . . three . . . and still no sign. At 4 a.m. the station officials showed signs of activity, and a minute later the Trans-Siberian Express drew in. Rain began to fall, and for half an hour we stood beside the track, wet and chilled, while attendants removed a lady who had just given birth to a child, and cleaned away the mud in order that we might deposit a fresh coat. Then the last of us climbed aboard.

There came a frenzied rush for berths, cries of disappointment which brought only the habitual "*nitchevo*" (no matter) from the conductor, disputes, recriminations, almost violence. People who had reserved a four-berth sleeper for themselves found that they had to share it with strangers.

Others, even more unfortunate, began to fear that they would not get a sleeper at all—which is not altogether a jest when you have a nine days' journey ahead.

In all the tumult and the shouting one man, and one only, remained wholly unperturbed. A diplomat by profession, a Swede by nationality, and a citizen of the world by virtue of his cosmopolitanism—he spoke six languages, had been everywhere and seen everything—he possessed all the arts of the complete wangler. Strolling through the crowd with an air which parted the ranks, he contrived somehow to gain the harassed conductor's attention and murmur something in his ear. What he said or offered I do not know, but the effect was magical. The rest continued to surge up and down the narrow passage, crying their hardships and injustices to the world in half a dozen different tongues; and even the two charming Bolshevik couriers carrying despatches from Peking to Moscow found, to their sombre rage, that they could not have a separate compartment wherein to keep secret M. Karakhan's propaganda.

This, as a little Russian Jew volubly explained to me, was rather a serious matter for the couriers, for it meant that they had to take in turns staying awake to guard their papers.

"If papers lost," said the Russian, "they have to kill themselves, sure. That happen only tree month ago. These couriers go to make protocol" —which suggested international complications but merely meant, it seemed, that the officials were lodging a complaint—"and I tink tings be very bad with this conductor. Two years in prison, I shouldn't be surprised."

But the Swede's right was never questioned.

[*Exclusive News Agency.*

WOMEN SELLING FLOWERS AND FOOD AT A WAYSIDE STATION ON THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY.

[*Exclusive News Agency.*

TYPICAL SIBERIAN STREET SCENE.

He had paid double for the luxury of a two-berth compartment to himself, and no one could doubt that he was going to have it. Fair-haired, mild-eyed, smoothly pink of cheek, nonchalant and very urbane, he surveyed the grumbling mass with tolerant amusement, bowed good night to one or two of us who had scraped up an acquaintance with him on the station, and gently but conclusively closed and locked the door.

Some days later, curious to learn what a typical Red would think of this polished representative of a capitalist State, I put a leading question to the conductor.

"M. ——," said the Bolshevik, with enthusiasm, "is a perfect gentleman."

Rather surprising people at times, these Reds. . .

* * * * *

## V. On a Siberian Train

If you travel on Russian trains you must be prepared for Russian ways—more especially the Red railwayman's cheerful habit of mixing up people in the sleepers regardless of age, nationality and sex.

The practice produces some curious results at times, and incidentally gives the beginning of every journey a certain piquant interest. Will you (so you ask yourself as you board the train) have to share a compartment with an obese Armenian lady and her three crying children? Will you be invited to share bed and board, so to speak, with a couple of suave, inoffensive but redundant Chinese? Or will you have to spend pleasant but embarrassing days and nights in the company of a beautiful ex-princess and two or three countesses?

My own doubts, owing to the delay at Chita, were horribly prolonged ; but even a Russian train cannot remain for ever at a station, and by five o'clock we had sorted ourselves out and were able to look around and take stock of each other. Very tired and cold after our all-night vigil, we threw ourselves down in our clothes and were soon asleep ; but not before I had observed that I was sharing a compartment with an English missionary, the Russian who had been so voluble about the grievances of the couriers, and his young and rather pretty wife.

He was a curious little fellow, this Russian Jew. He was very short and very tubby, and he wore a cloth hat with a narrow brim perched on top of his bristly round head, a gold wrist watch studded with jewels, and a bright brown suit which met so reluctantly around the waist that one constantly feared the moment when it would rebel. Three things in life he really loved—Success, Food, and his Rosie ; and he liked to talk about all three. Especially about Success, by which, of course, he meant Money.

" Hundreds," he would say with a gesture that came as near being lordly as anything those stubby fingers could achieve. " Hundreds ? I deal in hundreds of thousands. Last year I clean up—how much you tink ? "

I told him I could not possibly think in figures as big as I knew these figures were going to be.

" One hundred thousand dollars ! "

" Really ? " I did my best to sound impressed. " I never knew there was so much money."

" Yes," said the little man, with considerable satisfaction ; " one hundred thousand dollars—

and not Mexican dollars, you understand. One hundred thousand dollars gold."

Looking at him, from his round head to his pudgy feet, I wondered how on earth he had contrived to amass £20,000 in a year—four times the annual salary of a British Cabinet Minister, more than most great geniuses have received in the course of a lifetime. It came out—for, as I have already hinted, he was not reticent—that he was a speculator in furs.

Like most of his type and race, he had his little mannerisms, and very quaint they were ; but, true to type again, he was kindly, sympathetic and generous to a fault. He would lend money without the slightest security to perfect strangers ; and it was a perpetual grievance to him that we would not eat all the chicken and wonderful fish and quite delicious black caviare which he would begin buying at wayside stations at six o'clock in the morning. All one day he would gorge himself ; all the next, tortured by indigestion or something equally unromantic, he would groan and fast ; and if you did not follow much the same programme he thought you must be either ill or mad.

" Vot's der madder vid you ? " he would cry a dozen times a day. " Vy you no eat ? "

The rest of his time and attention he devoted to his wife—a black-eyed, rosy-cheeked young woman from the Crimea who cherished the delusion, probably due to too much spoiling, that she was very delicate. At the slightest suggestion of a sore throat she felt the grave already closing on her ; and she positively wailed in anguish if anyone ventured to open a window for five minutes at a time.

"I lak fresh air," she would cry. "But this draught! Eet is terrible! Eet kill you."

She rather complicated our dressing, this pretty little Jewess; but I don't think our presence worried her—possibly because the Russian woman has learned to disregard such trifles; possibly because she does not seem to take her toilet and bathing quite as seriously as the average Anglo-Saxon. She washes her hands, perfumes her hair and powders her nose; and for the rest, *nitchevo*. . . .

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### VI. Caviare for the General

But it was a wonderfully comfortable train withal, this Trans-Siberian Express. Before the war it boasted, amongst other things, an observation car, a library, a ladies' boudoir and a piano; but the old luxurious coaches have not been used since the Bolsheviks ran out of oil and grease, used butter as a lubricant, and ruined hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of rolling-stock. The new carriages, built in Russia, are very comfortable in the first-class, and not at all bad in the second. But no foreigner, if he has any choice, should dream of travelling third. Only a Russian can endure the pungent reek of sheepskin, leather and unwashed bodies which always arises whenever a crowd of moujiks is gathered together.

The wide gauge (5 feet 3 inches) makes for steadiness and comfort, but the Express is very slow—I doubt whether it ever exceeds 30 miles an hour—and is open to criticism in other ways. One first-class sleeper could not accommodate all those who wanted berths or separate coupés. The first and second-class passengers had to thread their way through a long line of ten or a dozen third-class

carriages, packed with unwashed and malodorous humanity, before reaching the dining-car with diminished appetites. The sexes, as I have said, were mixed indiscriminately in the sleepers—not that the Russian cares a kopeck about such details—and the price of extras in the way of luggage and food was exorbitant. Two small trunks cost me £8 10*s*. For half a chicken (which could be bought whole on the stations for 6*d*.) we were charged 6*s*., and an extra such as cheese at lunch meant an additional 3*s*. 9*d*. on the bill.

"Do not pay such prices!" cried the outraged little Jew, when the waiter—clad in the usual blue shirt and high boots—demanded one rouble fifty for a piece of cheese no bigger than half-a-crown.

I told him that in future I wouldn't.

The waiter, though he knew no English, pricked up his ears and put a question which even I could follow. "Would the Anglissky correspondent say in his newspapers that the price of cheese was one rouble fifty?"

"Comrade," I said, in the best Russian I could muster, while the fellow cheerfully grinned, "you can bet that shirt I will."

I have.

There were other things about the dining car which I found a little peculiar. The Russian does not divide his day's eating into three meals—breakfast, luncheon and dinner. He has breakfast any time between eleven and one, and dinner between five and nine; but his habits are uncertain and his feasts essentially movable. There seemed to be no hour of the day or night when some one was not eating the inevitable meat and cabbage, and washing it down with bottles of sour Crimean wine—almost the only sort you can

get in Russia since the Bolsheviks banned imported wines and spirits.

Fortunately there was no need to rely altogether upon the dining car. At all the principal stations across Siberia there are buffets where one can have a meal of sorts and buy provisions ; and at every siding there is a fountain where teapots may be filled with boiling water, and a little group of peasant women sell chicken, fish, butter and milk for next to nothing.

At daybreak each morning, long before the rest of us opened our eyes, the little Jew would be out bargaining on the stations ; and thanks to him we lived on the best of chicken and ham, delicious fish —I believe it is called sterig—and the most wonderful black caviare, very different from the stuff you buy abroad, all for two or three shillings a day each. Caviare, at 4*s*. 6*d*. a pound, was within the reach of even a moujik's purse and palate, always provided that he did not consume it, as we did, to excess.

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## VII. My Friend of the Café

He was a restaurant keeper in a little Siberian town—just which town it would be better not to say, for the Reds have their own way of showing displeasure towards people who talk too frankly to foreigners. Slim and straight he was, with clean-cut features and dark, alert eyes that sparkled with intelligence and spirit ; and his manners were charming.

He was not a Russian—that was obvious ; and it was also a pretty safe guess that he had not always earned his living by supplying coffee to the people of this ragged little town.

Curious to know more about him, I invited him to sit at my table. He accepted with the eagerness of an imprisoned man who appreciates any link, however fragile, with the world outside; and before long, in a low and cautious voice and in English that gained rather than lost by its picturesque inaccuracy, he told me something of his story.

He came, apparently, of an aristocratic family, was educated at a university in one of Europe's most famous cities—like many of these amazing people he spoke half a dozen languages—and on the outbreak of war was an officer in a cavalry regiment of one of the Central Powers. He was wounded four or five times, rose to high rank and at last was taken prisoner by the Russians.

For a time he was quite well treated. Then came the Revolution of 1917 and the establishment of the Soviet Government.

"And how did the Bolsheviks treat you?" I asked, at the end of a long pause.

"Ugh!" he shivered. "Let us not talk of it."

He went on to tell me how the Armistice found him in Siberia with no money and nothing to do, and how the idea came to him that perhaps he could make a living by running a coffee-house.

"The Russians," he said, "they know all about tea. But coffee? Dreadful! I think I will show them what real coffee is."

But to start even in a small way he required some capital. He looked around, found a cake-maker—a peasant by birth, but now well-to-do—and suggested that if the restaurant and the cake shop were run together it would be good for both businesses. The peasant, illiterate, but a shrewd judge of character, agreed to finance him, though

he heartily disapproved of the young man's coffee, and so the venture was begun.

It paid from the beginning. People soon acquired a taste for well-made coffee; and the spotless cleanliness of the place, and the pleasant hospitality of the ex-cavalryman, were something else that his patrons found new and attractive. The proprietor worked night and day, and at the end of a year had made a thousand roubles, or a little over £100. In another year, he realized exultingly, he would be able to fulfil his dream and get away to the United States.

But he rejoiced too soon. Half his savings were taken by the Government, and almost every week the taxes on his profits soared higher.

"I must try harder," he told himself; and from early morning till after midnight he worked away at his business, often tired and sometimes discouraged, but always consoling himself with the thought that every rouble he made brought release a little nearer.

But as time went on he realized that he was losing rather than gaining ground. Officials began to harass him with continual inquiries, and one day there came a demand for a tax that he had already paid. Fortunately he had kept the receipt, but it was only after a heated argument that the responsible official would admit that there had been a mistake. Moreover, the taxes on employers —in Russia the mere fact that you hire labour is sufficient to prove that you are a parasite and a profiteer—rose until the Government was taking every month 180 roubles out of 250 roubles, or about £20 out of £25.

"Seventy roubles!" he said, with the first trace of bitterness that he had shown. "When I pay

for food and a room and a few clothes—though as you see, sir, I am not expensive with my clothes—there is not much left for the passage to America. America is not quite so near as it was."

I could see that the iron of his fetters was eating into his soul, that for all his courage and jaunty nonchalance his nerves were beginning to fray under the strain of that struggle against odds. The loneliness, too, must have been horribly depressing: greasy, bearded peasants all around, a few small tradesmen, and hardly ever a soul from the great world beyond.

But, although he had not shaved that day—nearly always one of the first signs of weakening moral fibre—he had not yet lost his spirit. The life was telling on him, and in time might break him, but if he was not quite master of his fate, he was still captain of his soul.

"The other day," he said, "the Commandant of the Province, he send for me and say: 'We know you are a good leader of cavalry. We want you to become a Russian subject and to organize and command a troop.'"

"That's splendid," I said, glad to know that if his café failed he would still have a means of livelihood. "What did you say?"

"I say"—his black eyes flashed, his shoulders straightened and he beat his chest with a dramatic gesture that prepared me for the tremendous climax—"I say, 'Mr. Governor, *never time*.'"

It may not have been a wise decision, but it was, I think, a characteristic one. When I shook hands and stepped out into the cold Siberian night, I felt that I was saying good-bye to a true soldier and a very gallant gentleman.

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## VIII. Across Siberia

We had crossed the Yablanoi Mountains, the dividing range between the watersheds of the Amur and the Lena, and now we were running into country of a rather different kind—undulating, better cultivated, and for long stretches heavily timbered. We passed wheatfields where slow-moving peasants and stolid, bare-legged women were carting in the crops—very poor crops, most of them, for the Siberian is a slovenly farmer. And now and then we would pull up at a wayside station where passengers raced for hot water and food, and a few curious idlers, generally in greasy jackets and ungainly straw boots, hung about the unpainted wooden station to see one of the week's events—the arrival and departure of the Express.

On the third morning I awoke to find a wall of rock on my left, and water only a few yards away beneath the other window; and raising the blind, I looked out across glorious Lake Baikal. It was seven o'clock, the sun shone brightly out of a sky of clearest blue, and the water, rippling in the sunshine with a myriad points of light, stretched away to the wooded shore which, at this narrow end of the lake, was faintly visible as a dark, wavy line.

When the trans-Siberian line was first built, the Lake was crossed on great ferry boats specially designed for carrying whole trains and for breaking ice in winter. In time even the easy-going Russian rebelled against this clumsy system, and a line was built around the southern end of the Lake. This was not quite the trifling undertaking one might imagine, for the lake, boomerang-shaped, is 400 miles long, and it takes seven hours

or so to cover the new section that skirts the water's edge.

Baikal rounded, we rumbled slowly over the broad Angara River, and a little later were in Irkutsk. A convict settlement in the days when unhappy men and women set out from Moscow on the two-year march to Siberia and not infrequently left their whitening bones to blaze the trail, Irkutsk is now a picturesque city of about 100,000 inhabitants. The streets are wide, trees make dark splashes of green against the white beloved of Russian house-painters, and handsome churches lift their domes and spires high above the housetops. But here, too, I saw unpainted buildings, empty or idle shops, ragged children, old of face, begging around the station, and women with dull eyes, pinched faces and bare legs and feet.

For the next two days we rolled through great forests of beech, larch and pines; and then we reached the Yenesei, one of the longest rivers in Asia. Here, as in many other places, sentries guarded the bridge and barbed-wire entanglements still stood as a reminder that along this line the retreating White armies fought a losing battle when the Red tide swept eastward.

Krasnayarsk and Chelyabinsk, as picturesquely disreputable as the places that had gone before, came and went; and then we ran into a region of wooded hills. These, I learned, with surprise and some disappointment, were the famous Urals. All my life I had pictured a great rugged barrier dividing Europe and Asia; and here we were climbing a gradient so gentle that had one not been on the watch, it would have passed almost unnoticed. We reached the highest point and began to descend slowly towards the plain, and

when the train pulled up at the next wayside station I got out to stretch my legs and stepped for the first time upon the soil of Europe.

There was much in the rest of the interminable journey to Moscow that I found new and absorbing —the crossing of the Volga, with its rafts and quaint boatmen, a succession of little towns and villages of the type to which I was becoming accustomed, and much else besides.

And if the trip was not sensational—we were not wrecked, as the pessimist predicted—it was not without its incidents. At the very beginning, while the train stood at Chita, I noticed a big man in uniform striding up and down the corridor. Suddenly he turned sideways, flung open the door, and sprang in. What he expected to find I do not know, but, whatever it was, he was disappointed.

Next day came another incident which could only have occurred in Russia. A little girl of about ten wandered into our compartment, and, fixing a Russian woman with her black eyes, put what was evidently her usual introductory question.

" Do you believe in God ? " she said. " I don't."

Then, two or three days later, I heard an animated discussion in the corridor amongst some Reds, including the two pleasant couriers who had volunteered to befriend me.

I observed that one foreigner, who could speak Russian, was listening intently. Later he explained.

" The newspapers report that there has been a rising in China," he said. " The couriers were saying ' Good ! Good ! I hope they kill all the British and Americans. What we want in China is plenty of blood.' "

Charming fellows.

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## IX. The World's Greatest Railway

The Trans-Siberian is not ordinarily included amongst what people delight to call the wonders of the world. But it should be, for there is something splendid in its immensity, something epic about its forward-reaching sweep. The very fact that you may enter it at Moscow and step out at Vladivostock, on the remote Pacific, without once changing trains, is still rather marvellous, I think, even in a world which is losing its capacity for wonder.

Begun in 1891, the railway was built at the rate of a mile a day—considerably faster than the Canadian Pacific—was completed in ten years, and cost £85,000,000. On the way from Moscow to Vladivostock you travel more than 5,000 miles, and the Trans-Siberian is by far the longest railway in the world.

But it is not, as some people believe, the straightest. That doubtful distinction, made possible only by monotony of landscape and absence of settlement, belongs to the section of Australia's East-West Railway which crosses without the slightest deviation the 300 miles of the Nullarbor ("No Tree") Plain. The Trans-Siberian was built by Russians, to whom money is always of more consequence than time, and so it never goes over or under an obstacle if it is possible to go round it.

At times it seems as if the only things the engineers would not deviate for are the towns. When it was first built the stations were usually anything from a mile to five miles from the places they were supposed to serve; and though the towns have grown since those days and gravitated more or less towards the nearest station, you still have to walk

or drive some distance along dark, unpaved roads before you find yourself in the city proper. At Chita, for instance, you cross an unlighted paddock —I fancy they call it a park—and then stumble over gutters and squelching mud in black streets, all at some slight risk to your throat, before reaching the comparative brilliance of a few shops and eating houses.

One city, Tomsk, was neglected altogether. The story goes that when the line was being surveyed the engineers, looking out for " graft " in the good old Russian way, approached the Mayor and asked how much it would be worth to have the railway touch the town. The Mayor declined to pay anything, pointing out very reasonably that as Tomsk was then the capital, and the most important town in Western Siberia, it could not possibly be ignored. The engineers thought otherwise, and promptly found good reasons why the line should pass 60 miles farther south ; and although a branch line has since been built, Tomsk never recovered from the blow to its pride and trade.

But, admitting that it was imperfectly surveyed and can boast no engineering triumph like the piercing of the Alps or the crossing of the Rockies, the Trans-Siberian remains the greatest of all the world's railroads. It is not merely its length that counts, or the fact, remarkable enough in itself, that it bridges the largest of the continents from the Baltic to the sea of Okhotsk.

What captures the imagination is the tremendous part it has played, and the still more tremendous part it is destined to play, in the development of a region half as big again as all Europe.

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## X. The Land of Promise

Forty years ago people thought of Siberia, not without some reason, as a vast and awful solitude. Russians shuddered and crossed themselves at the very name. Foreigners pictured chained captives stumbling across snowy wastes and writhing as brutal overseers plied the lash. The country was noted for its furs, and here and there crude little towns, populated mainly by convicts and sons of convicts, were beginning to rise. But apart from the outposts, Siberia was much the same as it was on the New Year's Day of 1581 when Yermak, the river-pirate, cut-throat and empire-builder, fled with a few Cossack followers across the Urals to escape the troops of Ivan the Terrible.

Then came the railway, and Siberia began to boom as Canada did after the building of the Canadian Pacific, and the Wild West of the United States did when tracks of steel and Sitting Bull's "Iron Horse" took the place of the Pony Express. Villages sprang up around every station, the older villages became towns, a great port was established at Vladivostock, wheat-growing and mining became the principal industries, and the whole country awakened to sudden and amazing activity.

And Siberia was not the only country brought to life by the touch of the navvy's pick. Even before the Trans-Siberian was finished, far-sighted and ambitious men in St. Petersburg planned the conquest of Manchuria and Korea; and, as a first step towards this end, built two great railway lines. One was an alternative and shorter route for the Trans-Siberian through Manchuria to Vladivostock. The other was the Chinese Eastern Rail-

way running south towards Korea. By 1901 the whole great project was practically finished, and Russia was well advanced with her plan for dominating the whole of the Far East.

As it happened, the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5 shattered de Witte's grandiose dreams; but the economic consequences of the gigantic experiment have been none the less tremendous. Siberia has already proved its capacity to support a great population of agriculturists and miners, and from a forbidding region of snow and exiles, should develop into the Canada of the East. And Manchuria—for the Trans-Siberian and the Manchurian system were all part of the same politico-military scheme—now supports more than 20,000,000 people and sends hundreds of thousands of tons of grain and soya beans every year to Dairen and Vladivostock.

There is still much to do, of course, before the promise of either these countries is realized; but their future is assured. Siberia's enormous size, fertility, splendid water system and infinite wealth in the way of minerals, timber and furs, make it quite certain that some day north-eastern Asia will be the home of a new and virile race, 50 or 100 million strong, which will take its place amongst the great nations of the world.

But one may be tolerably sure that Siberia will never be properly developed, or enter into its full heritage, as long as its policy is laid down by a committee of Communists in remote Moscow.

(*Topical Press.*

STATUE OF VOROVSKY, THE BOLSHEVIK LEADER WHO WAS ASSASSINATED AT LAUSANNE.

(Foreign Office in the background.)

# CHAPTER XVII

## MOSCOW

The End of the Journey—Reckless Chauffeurs—The Savoy and its Manager—First Impressions of Moscow—Swarms of Beggars—"Opium for the People"—Moscow's Stormy Past—Historic Buildings—The Kremlin—The Pineapple Church—Lenin's Tomb—Embalming Difficulties—An Overcrowded City—The Cult of Nudity—Not Encouraged by the Reds—Isadora Duncan—Famous Dancer now Penniless.

FOR nine days the train had been my home. I had dined on it, shaved on it, washed on it, and slept on it, soothed rather than distracted by its rhythmic sway and rumble. And still we rolled on, steadily and unhurriedly, towards the point where those parallel lines, in defiance of pre-Einstein law, came together and vanished as one into the horizon.

But we were nearing our journey's end. A suburb flitted by, we ran into the heart of a great city, and still seven hours late—we were, as I have said, sixteen hours late leaving Chita—the great Siberian Express drew into a station and pulled up with a harsh grinding of brakes.

"Da, da, da, Moskva," cried the tall conductor—still in the blue shirt and high boots without which the self-respecting Russian worker considers himself half-naked.

Half glad and half sorry to reach the end of that which had seemed endless, I climbed stiffly down

to the platform and set out to recover my baggage. After a prolonged dispute—if you can apply the word dispute to a conversation consisting of vehement Russian on one side and staccato English abuse on the other—two obstinate officials were reluctantly persuaded that I had no contraband. Three porters carried my things fifty yards, and grumbled, as the Russian porter always does, when I gave them three shillings each ; and five minutes later I was in an aged and infirm hire car, bumping and rattling through the streets of Moscow.

I had a vague impression of long rows of buildings, mostly painted white ; and at one place I noticed a high wall and a massive arch ; but I am afraid I saw little else. A driver who passes corners at 30 miles an hour, and seems bent on taking off the other fellow's wheel in the good old coaching style, is hardly the best companion if you wish to look at a city with the right blend of intellectual curiosity and leisurely detachment. Until then I had thought the Javanese and Malays the worst chauffeurs in the world, but it was clear that the Reds of Moscow ran them very close.

" Tid-apa ? " (Why worry ?) observes the Malay, as he sits down on the wreckage, surveys the corpse and lights a cigarette.

" Nitchevo," whines the Russian, after the manner of Bismarck's Petrograd coachman, as that rash fellow picked himself out of the gutter and met the eye of his infuriated master, " nitchevo, nitchevo."

The journey from the station to the Savoy Hotel took ten minutes, perhaps less. For this the Russian charged fifteen roubles, or £1 13*s.* 6*d.*—roughly ten times the London rate and twenty times that of Paris. When I questioned the charge the hotel

clerk explained that the railway authorities had assured him the train would arrive at the usual hour. Consequently, the taxi had made an unnecessary journey at six o'clock that morning, and was charging me double. It sounded quite characteristic of Russian officials; but it is equally likely that the clerk and the chauffeur were lying and sharing their little bit of "graft."

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## II. A Moscow Hotel

There are only two hotels in Moscow which are frequented by foreigners, the Savoy and the Europe; and the Savoy, I am assured, is by far the better. But even the Savoy is not a jolly place. The entrance is mean, its corridors prison-like, its rooms bare and dismal. Still, it has the virtue—rare in Russia—of comparative cleanliness. It is equipped, moreover, with bath-rooms, water, sanitation, and a telephone in each room; the meals are (or were) quite good; and I found the staff civil and obliging. One class-conscious fellow, evidently trained as a waiter abroad, even called you "Sir."

But the charges, all things considered, were absurd. I did not greatly object to paying £1 a day for a room, small and bare though it was; but baths cost 3*s.* 6*d.* a day, a hair cut 4*s.* 6*d.*, and a breakfast consisting of two fried eggs, toast and coffee, 11*s.* Altogether it was difficult to live at the place for much less than £20 a week.

The maximum wage in Russia, even for generals and commissars, being only £5 a week, the Savoy is given up to concession-hunting foreigners, mainly Germans. (German goods and German motor-cars are everywhere conspicuous in Moscow.) You eat

your meals with a Frenchman on one side, two or three glum Germans on the other, and half a dozen other foreigners, of doubtful nationality, close around. There is a babel of foreign tongues. Every one eyes his neighbour furtively, and suspects the waiter (possibly with justice) of being a spy. And over the whole hotel there is an air of gloom and suspicion.

To intensify my dislike of the place, there was a tall, thin, bow-legged fellow with lank, red hair, ferrety yellow eyes, a long nose, a straight-lipped mouth, and a raucous voice. Like others, I loathed him on sight, and his habit of bellowing to some one across the courtyard in the early hours of the morning did not increase his popularity. I wondered who the swaggering lout could be. He couldn't possibly earn enough in the ordinary way to stay at such a place ; and no foreign firm, unless it courted bankruptcy, would employ him in the tricky business of concession-hunting. Yet here he was, and doing himself pretty well, if one might judge from a breakfast-tray piled with an odd assortment of chicken, eggs, toast, fruit, coffee and burgundy.

For days that fellow puzzled me. Then one day I walked into the office to settle my account and the mystery was solved. He was the Communist manager.

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### III. A City of Gloom

The cleanliness and orderliness of the streets; poverty revealing itself in poor clothes, dingy buildings and swarms of beggars; and a general atmosphere, hard to define, but depressingly real, of suspicion, suspense, and gloom—these were the

first things which impressed me when I set out to see Moscow.

The streets are badly lighted, and, as they always were, are very roughly cobbled. But they have the major virtues of soundness and dryness even in the wettest weather, and they are kept scrupulously clean. The Reds have a perfect passion for discipline, and are trying, with fair success, to bludgeon the people into cleanliness and order. Drop a matchbox or a cigarette, and, if you are seen by a militia-man—he objects strongly to being called a policeman—he will promptly collect a fine of one rouble (2*s.* 3*d.*). Board a moving tram-car, or leave by the wrong door, and you pay another rouble. The Russian's every step and every turn are directed by cast-iron regulations designed to reduce him to the level of an automatic and unquestioning machine.

But it is characteristic of the Soviet régime that in other ways, where some firmness might be expected, the officials are noticeably slack. They do little to suppress the systematic robbery that poverty makes inevitable ; and though crimes of violence are not abnormally common, hold-up men seem to operate with very little risk of detection. Neither is any effort made to check soliciting in the streets, or to reduce the numbers of the thousands of beggars of both sexes and all ages who ply their dismal trade.

They are a tragic spectacle, these poor mendicants of Moscow. Hungry women hold babies before your eyes, toothless men bob their heads and mumble inaudible appeals, cripples drag themselves along the ground uttering plaintive cries, war veterans who have lost an arm or leg are sickeningly eager to capitalize their misfortunes by

exposing the stump or some revolting scar; and they are all extraordinarily and horribly persistent. Some will follow you fifty yards, clutching your sleeve with filthy hands; and immediately you give a few kopecks to one, half a dozen others swarm around you with hungry eyes and outstretched hands.

Some idea of the number of beggars may be gathered from the fact that I counted forty-four in fifty paces along one side of the square facing the Bolshoy Theatre. A few of them obviously belonged to the professional mendicant class that you find in every city, but the majority seemed to be decent men and women who had been forced by hunger to this last extremity. The middle-class man or woman who has the misfortune to be out of work may find other employment, or earn a precarious living by joining the army of those who peddle chocolate, matches, stockings, and such trash; but, failing this, there is only starvation or the last sad descent to the streets.

Every one is poor in Moscow, and looks it. Most of the men affect the conventional blue shirts and leather belts; women wear the cheapest of coats and skirts or knitted one-piece dresses. Prices are so high that the great majority of people can afford only the poorest quality, and with nine women out of ten in black or dark colours the crowds look drab and sombre.

Gloomy crowds they are, for the most part: hurrying, preoccupied men and sad-faced women, with never a chatting couple or laughing face. Bolshevism may or may not have produced certain of the blessings claimed by its supporters, but you have only to walk down a street, and watch the faces you pass, to perceive that it has not brought

happiness. For one thing, life is too full of anxiety and uncertainty. The Communist is sure of either employment or a dole; but then, of the 130,000,000 people in Russia, only 700,000 are Communists.

Food is not very dear if bought at a street stall or one of the popular shops, but the price of everything else is extortionate. A pair of women's tan shoes of very indifferent quality costs £3 or £3 10*s*.; a poor pair of gloves, 15*s*.; a cheap cotton shirt (of the sort sold in London for 5*s*.), at least £1; a very bad ready-made suit, £10; and a cake of chocolate (worth 6*d*.), 2*s*. 3*d*. And for things imported by the Government, which controls all foreign trade, prices are much higher. For a box of gramophone needles, worth 1*s*., an American friend paid 10*s*. The same man was charged 5*s*. a drink and 11*s*. a cigar at a so-called American bar, and for rashly consuming a single pear had to pay 11*s*. A Russian, of course, can live much more cheaply than a foreigner, but I noted that even a worker's eating house charged a rouble (2*s*. 3*d*.) for a little milk and bread, and estimated that commodities other than food were from 200 to 300 per cent. dearer than in London.

In Moscow, as elsewhere in Russia, practically all the larger shops have either been nationalized or taken over by co-operative societies, which amounts to much the same thing, and many of the finer private and semi-private houses have been converted to public use. The Metropole, once Moscow's most fashionable hotel, has been turned into public offices, and the graceful white building formerly occupied by the exclusive club of the nobility is now a Trades Hall.

The revolution, in spite of its bitter street

fighting, seems to have caused astonishingly little damage in Moscow. One or two statues of little artistic value were knocked down ; here and there you come across a building whose pitted walls tell their own story ; and the appearance of the Town Hall has scarcely been improved by the two huge inscriptions : " Religion—Opium for the People " and " The Wave of Revolution Sweeps Back All Who Resist It." But no building or institution of any value was seriously damaged. I walked through the famous Church of St. Basil, in the Red Square, which was reported to have been destroyed, and found the other churches, with the exception of one little place pulled down for traffic reasons, in fairly good repair. Their golden domes still glitter as of old in the clear Moscow air, and the ikons, or holy pictures enclosed in glass cases, are still displayed both inside the churches and on the walls outside.

The churches, of course, are cared for by the priests and maintained by the people ; but for certain other things the authorities really can claim some credit. The museums and art galleries are kept in fair condition, and have considerable educational value—or at least they would have if you did not need quite so many permits to gain admission to some of them. The trams and trains are regular and by no means bad. And the postal and telegraph service is quite good—and would be even better, perhaps, if the officials did not reserve to themselves the right to open all your correspondence and deliver only such portions as they think good for you.

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## IV. Where East meets West

Moscow is in some ways, I think, the ideal capital. It has grown with the Russian people, prospered when they prospered, suffered when they suffered ; and because of all this, you find there, far more than in Petrograd, the embodiment of the nation's character, and its history written large in stone. Its gilded domes, so obviously Oriental, are a standing reminder that it was only yesterday, as time counts in the development of nations, that these people came riding out of the East ; and the odd contrast between the magnificence of Moscow's palaces and the rough cobbles of the streets is characteristic of a land where an extraordinarily cultured intelligentsia and the most brutish peasants in Europe have for generations lived side by side.

Built where six highways intersect, Moscow was originally, I suppose, a centre where traders from many lands met and bartered furs, silks and other merchandise as they do to-day in Nijni-Novgorod and the picturesque towns of Central Asia. It is not a very ancient city, as cities go ; but probably no capital in Europe has had such a stormy history. It was plundered and burned in 1237 and again in 1293 by the Mongols, the greatest scourge Eastern Europe had known since the days when Attila swept westward in search of richer prey ; and in 1382, two years after the great battle of Kulikovo, where the Russians ventured for the first time to stand up against the Tartars, it was stormed once more by the Golden Horde under Toktamish Khan. In 1571 the Tartars of the Crimea captured and burned the whole city outside the Kremlin, 170,000 people of a total of 200,000 perishing by fire or the

sword ; and it was not until 1591 that the Tartars made their last great raid.

Then came a period of comparative quiet. In 1703 Peter the Great, disgusted by the squabbling of nobles and petty rulers, founded a new capital at St. Petersburg ; but Moscow did not again suffer material disaster till it was destroyed by fire in 1812 —by the order of Rostopchin, some say, but more probably by accident—while Napoleon impatiently waited for a delegation of nobles and received only a few merchants. And in 1917, of course, Moscow became the capital again, and began to grow in importance and population as St. Petersburg's glory waned.

It is not very entertaining, perhaps, this trite and none too authoritative survey ; but it is hard to escape the past in Moscow, for its relics are all around you. Stroll down the street from the hotel, and there, just ahead of you, rises the Chinese wall, enclosing what was once the chief trading centre ; and west of that, on the left bank of the Moskva river, is the Kremlin, Moscow's very heart.

The Kremlin was originally a fortified area of 100 acres, surrounded by a high stone wall 2,430 yards long with nineteen towers and five gates. One of these gates, the Saviour's Gate, was built in 1491 by a Milanese architect whose name I forget ; but the Gothic tower, 203 feet high, was added in 1626 by the English architect Holloway. A sacred picture of the Saviour was placed in the tower in 1647, and for hundreds of years all who passed beneath used to bare their heads. But, even though religion is not dead, you don't see many heads bared in the Moscow streets these days.

The Kremlin being the city's core and stronghold, it is there that you find the palace of the

Czars, the old arsenal, the Senate, the law courts, and many churches, convents and monasteries, and the lofty campanile of Ivan Veliky, built in the Lombardo-Byzantine style by Boris Godounov in 1600. The campanile, including the cross, soars 318 feet, and contains, amongst many other bells, one weighing 64 tons.

Beside the Kremlin is the Kitai-Gorod, a walled enclosure of 121 acres, and the Red Square. The Kitai-Gorod was once the chief business area for foreigners. Hence, I suppose, the name "Kitai," the Russian word for China, from which we derive "Cathay"; for in the late Middle Ages the Chinese Empire extended as far west as Persia and the Black Sea, and its traders took their merchandise across the great caravan route to Teheran, Tabriz, Bokhara and Moscow. The Red Square, more than half a mile long, was once the market place, forum and place of execution: but it is interesting to-day chiefly because the famous Pokrovsky Cathedral—also called the Church of St. Basil and the Pineapple Church—stands at the lower end, with the tomb of Lenin near by.

Russians are very proud of the Church of St. Basil; and historically it is very precious. It was begun by order of Ivan the Terrible in 1554 to commemorate the conquest of the Kazan, but not completed till 1679. (A very slight acquaintance with church history induces the belief that good works are seldom hurried.) It was plundered and desecrated by the French in 1812, and restored between 1839 and 1845.

But with churches, as with persons, it is one thing to be interesting and quite another thing to be beautiful; and the Church of St. Basil—I know Russians will think this blasphemy—is very, very

ugly. The architect, whose eyes (so legend says) were put out by Ivan's order so that he might never build another church, designed the many towers in the shape of pineapples, melons and other edible but unlovely fruits, and the general effect is bizarre and rather barbarous.

The interior is just as eccentric. The building is a warren of low, narrow galleries, decorated with monotonous patterns in the crudest of colours; and the holy pictures which hang on the walls of one little chamber are interesting rather than beautiful. Their draughtsmanship is quite untrammelled by any sense of perspective, and the colouring is crude; but historically they are priceless. Apart altogether from their place in the history of Russia's religion and art, they are a striking proof of the rapid Europeanization—if one may use such a horrible word—that the Russian has undergone during the last five or six centuries. It is pretty safe to assume that, just as the Dutch make Mary a blonde, high-breasted vrouw, and the Italians give her a face of the purest Italian cast, so the Russians were creating in their own image when they did these pictures of Christ and the Virgin. Christ has lank, black hair, a very thin bony nose, high cheek-bones, narrow eyes and a thin moustache drooping from the corners of the mouth; and you may find the sisters of Mary in any Tartar city of Central Asia, and her cousins in Urga and Peking. Both are unmistakably Mongols.

There are many other things to see in Moscow, especially in the way of churches and monasteries, for it has always been a characteristic of the Russians that even the greatest scoundrels are ever ready to heap up stone and coloured glass

to demonstrate their faith. The most impressive is the massive Church of the Redeemer, which was begun in 1837 and completed, at a cost of £1,600,000, in 1883. It is faced with marble and surmounted by five great gilded domes; and the interior is enriched with gold and marble and pictures by Verestchagin and other masters. But to my taste the two most beautiful buildings in Moscow are the Bolshoy Theatre and the white church, small but exquisite, which stands a quarter of a mile or so beyond it.

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### V. At Lenin's Tomb

The tomb of Lenin is a plain wooden structure, not without a certain dignity. Here, at the stroke of four each day, the doors are thrown open and the assembled crowd files in and clatters downstairs to gaze upon the mummified body of the dead leader.

I walked in with the rest one day, and there, in the middle of the sepulchre, I saw a glass case. In this was the open coffin. A Red soldier, with fixed bayonet, stood motionless at the head; and on the wall behind was a tricolor carried by the leaders of the French Commune.

The spectators, mostly the poorer workers, with here and there a peasant, filed slowly past the coffin, staring fixedly as they went; and in a minute or two it was my turn to drink my fill of that sombre scene.

There he lay, this man of strife and bloody revolution, his hands by his side, his heavy lids closed, his rugged, rock-like face full of a peace he had never known in life.

A powerful face, I thought, but not exactly a pleasant one. There was tremendous intellect

written on the dome-like forehead, unshakable resolution and ruthless severity in the massive, slightly undershot jaw, thick, grim lips and harshly jutting chin ; but I looked in vain for any sign of mercy, or æsthetic sense, or appreciation of the gentler things of life. A great man Lenin may have been, but unless his dead face lies, not a lovable one.

The authorities had some trouble with the corpse at first. Owing to unskilful and hasty embalming, it began to decompose, and the features, I am told, turned a rather horrible green. A conference of eminent doctors and chemists was summoned, restorative measures were undertaken, and at the end of weeks of work the experts announced that the body would endure like the mummies prepared by those wonderful Egyptian chemists who, " by precious embalming, depositure in dry earth, or handsome inclosure in glasses, contrived the notablest ways of integral preservation."

I wonder. I wondered, too, as I gazed upon the great rebel's body, what treatment it would have at the hands of posterity. Would it, in ages to come, be revered as a holy relic ? Or would it, in some great revulsion of feeling, be desecrated like the bodies of Marius and the regicides, and many another who in his day had been acclaimed by cheering multitudes ? Or would it merely be neglected and crumble slowly into dust ? Who can say ? " Who," to quote Sir Thomas Browne again, " knows the fate of his bones, or how often he is to be buried ? Who hath the oracle of his ashes, or whither they are to be scattered ? "

But just at present Lenin is in no danger of desecration at the hands of rabbles or decay through the mortality of the flesh. His tomb has

become a shrine ; his corpse looks in death as it looked in life—some say rather better. His face is so smooth, indeed, and his skin so life-like, that I wondered whether, for political reasons, the officials had masked corruption behind a new wax face rather than admit that the body of the dictator had gone the way of humbler flesh and cheated the worms in vain.

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## VI. "Down with Shame!"

There is much else to interest one in Moscow, but nothing so curious, I thought, as the conditions of housing. One seldom sees a cottage, or even a moderate-sized dwelling, and few of the people make their homes, as most Anglo-Saxons do, in residential suburbs. They prefer to live above their shops or offices, or in some great tenement house just off a main street. You pass through an arch, and in a few strides you leave the bustle and roar of the street behind and find yourself in a quiet backwater, where children play and birds flutter in the trees. Later I was to find places like them, only much more beautiful, in the Temple and the old Inns of London ; but they were new to me then, and very charming, I thought.

Before the war 10 per cent. of the dwellings—if you reckon each flat or apartment as a dwelling—were beneath the level of the ground, and there was an average of two persons to a room. Now the conditions are much worse. Since Moscow became the capital again there has been an enormous increase in the population without any corresponding increase in the accommodation, and the overcrowding has become appalling. One good-sized room of, say, 30 feet by 18, is expected to hold

three; and you need not feel surprised if, on engaging a room, you find nothing more substantial than a screen or a curtain separating you from a man on one side and a woman on the other. These conditions have produced many curious results—amongst them, the marriage of aged couples to save rent.

I was told that overcrowding was also having a serious effect on the people's morals; and, if experience in other cities is any guide, this is probably true. But I saw little sign of the licentious spirit which was supposed to have resulted in free love, naked processions and other erotic eccentricities. There had been a few processions of men and women who wore only a scarf on which the bold device "Down with Shame!" was emblazoned; but the authorities, far from encouraging these naked believers, resorted to a stratagem to check them. In a land where all were theoretically free to please themselves in such matters, the police thought they could hardly force people to wear clothes; but they could (such was their reasoning) force the enthusiasts to be consistent. If they went naked in the summer, so the decree ran, they must go naked all the year round. The members of the cult thought of the Moscow winter, when the snow lies thick in the streets and the temperature falls below zero, and they very prudently decided to resume the habiliments of shame.

And this is not the only instance of the Government interfering with rather surprising primness to check what was regarded as licence. It was found that the fox-trot was being performed in a way that the censors—or possibly their wives—considered immodest, and so to this day imported dances are forbidden.

LENIN'S TOMB IN THE RED SQUARE, MOSCOW.

[*Topical Press.*

Altogether I found the people of Moscow very much like people elsewhere—rather more pious, if anything, for they have no money for easy spending, no cabarets and gay restaurants wherein to go wrong. Suffering, moreover, has brought them face to face with the realities of life as only suffering does. Prostitution is no more conspicuous than in London or any other great city, though I was told that venereal disease was rampant ; and the people in general show no sympathy with free love or the cult of nudity. In fact, when one lady, a little *passée*, stepped naked on to a tram the passengers left in a body, the more severe or possibly more playful critics emphasizing their disapproval by slapping her as they passed. When last seen the innovator,

"noble and nude and antique,"

was travelling rapidly in an easterly direction while an agitated conductor pulled frantically at the cord.

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## VII. A Fallen Star

The light was dim in the big, strangely-furnished room, and all I could see at first was a figure moving towards me.

" Are you Isadora Duncan ? " I asked, carefully avoiding, as one should amongst good Reds, such courtesies as " Madame." (Telephone girls in Moscow, following instructions, instantly hang up the receiver if you call them " baryshna," the Russian for " Miss."

" I am all that is left of her," replied a rich, deep contralto ; and, my eyes more accustomed to the

light, I saw a woman offering her hand in welcome with a grave, sad smile.

She was a striking figure. She was no longer young, and her face bore signs of sorrow and disappointment and suffering. Things had not gone well with her since she startled the world a few years ago by embracing Bolshevism. Her public in other lands had dropped her, her school of dancing in Moscow had been left without State aid, and the Russian poet she married had brutally ill-used her till she divorced him. But she walked with the easy grace of a girl, still radiated much of the charm for which she was once famous, and talked in her soft, low-pitched voice as few women can talk. For Isadora Duncan, erratic though she undoubtedly is, is one of those rare beings in whom you find blended a feeling for art and uncommon qualities of intellect.

Sitting on a deep and wide divan, she told me how she had first been attracted by the cause of Communism, how she had sacrificed highly profitable contracts and ruined her career by going to Moscow, and how she had since been disillusioned and disgusted, not so much with Communism as with the Communists.

"I gave up everything—everything—for Russia," she said. "I saw here a new era beginning, a new nation in the building. How glorious it would be, I thought, to teach its children to dance and to express, through that beautiful medium, all that the revolution meant to them: the bursting of bonds, the sudden exulting consciousness of freedom, the new joy in life. And so I left the world I knew, and which knew me, and came to Russia. You remember the stir that caused? The front pages of newspapers throughout the

world told their readers that Isadora Duncan had turned Bolshevik. You remember, don't you ? " she repeated, as if pathetically eager for assurance that she was once famous.

" I remember," I said gravely. And indeed what she said was true.

" But that was years ago," she sighed. " Now ? I have given up everything for Russia. What has Russia done for me ? I am teaching, without any reward, these children that I will show you. Are they poor ? They are Russians. And I am not only teaching them but keeping them. This big house, once occupied only by a rich merchant and his mistress, is now the home of forty children who are not only learning to dance but who find here peace and cleanliness and culture. Forty happy children in the place of a fat merchant and his mistress—is that not a gain ? But the Soviet officials have let me do all this unaided. True, they have allowed me to occupy this house rent free ; but they expect me to pay taxes and water and lighting charges, and at this very minute I owe 250 roubles, or about £27. I cannot possibly pay it. My money is all gone. I was a millionairess—once ; and even two or three years ago I had £40,000. But, apart from a villa in Paris, which for some reason I cannot realize on, I haven't a penny in the world, and we have all lived to-day on nothing but tea and rice. To-morrow ? "—she shrugged her shoulders—" I do not know what will happen to-morrow."

I asked her why she did not leave.

" How can I ? " she replied. " Since I turned Communist the Governments of the United States and Canada will not let me in. England would probably refuse permission also, and in any case

the bourgeois English public, which always confuses other things with art, would stay away. And of course I have to think of my school and the children to whom I am mother and father. Besides, even when I did leave once, I found the rest of the world strangely empty and meaningless. Here in Moscow things are done every day that make me shudder ; but still it is the birth-place of an ideal, the only thing to-day that really matters. For me, Lenin is the new Buddha, the new Christ, and Communism is the light of the world."

"But I have talked enough," she added "Come and see my children dance."

And she led the way to a big room, unfurnished save for a piano.

Here I saw one of her classes, consisting of twenty girls ranging from about eight to sixteen, go through the exercises and dances she had taught. Rather beautiful some of them were, especially the pastoral where the twenty frolicked and danced in a meadow amongst the flowers.

Then came a dramatic change. The blue-shirted pianist struck up Schubert's *Marche Militaire*, and with glaring eyes and grimly-set mouths they did their dance of the revolution. It was very real, and rather terrible. You saw fierce strife, the fall of the defeated, the exulting of the rebels. And, as a fitting climax, they all sang "The International," while Isadora Duncan herself acted the part of the slave who bursts his bonds, strikes down his oppressor and realizes joyously that he is free.

It was a strange and unforgettable scene : the dancer once idolized in all the capitals of the world, the excited Bolshevik children, and the blue-shirted fellow at the piano, who looked like a navvy and played like a genius.

"Is it not beaut-i-ful?" cried an enraptured Communist in my ear.

Had he described that performance as dramatic, or faithful to the spirit of the revolution, I should have agreed with him. But beautiful? I looked at those fresh young faces, disfigured with hate and cruelty as they stood over the fallen foe, rejoicing in their religion of hate; and though I thought of many adjectives, beautiful was not one of them.

# CHAPTER XVIII

## RED RUSSIA

The Truth about Communism—Majority without Rights—Economic Failure of the System—The Peasants' Revolt—Problem of Concessions—The Fall of Trotsky—Terrorism Backed by Bayonets—Karl Radek's Admissions—"Freedom A Danger"—Amazing Bolshevik Justice—I Visit three Prisons—Priests, Airmen and an Englishwoman—Russia's Simple, Kindly President—Strange Scenes in his Ante-Room—Discontent amongst the Peasants—Undermining the British Empire—The Menace in the East.

IT was not only to see the city that I went to Moscow. Like many another, I was consumed with curiosity as to the working of the Soviet system. Much of what I had read was obviously untrue, some of it was doubtful, and nearly all of it was biassed. Here was a chance to study conditions for myself. My time was limited—I had only six weeks in all—and I had little opportunity for the laborious compilation of statistics. But I could hardly fail to see something of the people's life at this very fountain-head of Bolshevism—how they worked, played, fed, dressed, thought and reacted generally to the changes of the revolution. And as I had no axe to grind, no prejudice beyond a passion for democracy and the normal man's love of justice and freedom, I think I can claim that I was tolerably free of bias.

What preconceptions I had were not all unfavourable to the Soviet system. I did not for a moment believe that women had been nationalized,

that babies had been torn from their mothers' arms and entrusted to the State, that priests had all been put to death and every church destroyed. I heavily discounted the stories of organized Bolshevik atrocities and tortures, as distinct from the lawless deeds of rabbles; and I had learned enough in Manchuria and Siberia to know that in the bloody horrors of the civil war there was little to choose between Whites and Reds.

What I did believe was that, in their own fashion, the Soviet leaders were fighting for liberty and equality. There had been a reign of terror, and, on the Bolshevik leaders' own admission, it had been found necessary to do many terrible things to safeguard the achievements of the revolution from the counter-attacks of the aristocrats, militarists and bourgeoisie. But I was convinced that, in their own fashion, the Bolsheviks were advancing towards the light and honestly trying to realize some such ideal as the French revolutionaries summed up in the phrase Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, and the Americans in the immortal document which begins with the declaration that all men are born free and equal.

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## II. By its Fruits

I soon discovered my mistake. Liberty and equality find no place in the Communist's creed, and both in the theory and practice of Bolshevism are spurned as the worn-out trappings of a bourgeois State.

This is not my own biassed interpretation of Communist theory. On the contrary, it defines an attitude of mind that the Communist is proud

of and quite ready to defend. Revolutionaries in other lands, viewing Russia from a comfortable distance, may hail it as the paradise where all men are free and equal; but the Moscow Communist makes no such claim, and would regard it as a serious misinterpretation of his creed. For whereas Socialism implies equality and liberty within legal limitations acceptable to the majority, Communism as practised in Moscow involves ruthless suppression of the individual's liberty, frank recognition of the principle of inequality, and acceptance of the irresponsible, autocratic, and essentially class rule which is called the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Communist denies certain categories of people even such elementary rights as the franchise, and maintains that the majority must be terrorized into accepting the views and principles of the minority. The average man and woman, he will tell you, are not fit for freedom, do not know what is good for them or for the State, and must be ruthlessly bludgeoned into acknowledging the dictatorship of a superior and dominant class.

The constitution, it is true, declares that "all citizens are equal before the law," but no genuine Communist takes the constitution seriously. "The Russian proletariat and the Communist party," observes Karl Radek, one of the Red's leading publicists, quite frankly, "cannot permit the Soviet constitution to be forged into a weapon for the destruction of Soviet power and the abolition of the dictatorship of the proletariat by the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie." In other words, the majority are not allowed to do certain things which are perfectly legal even under the constitution drawn up by the Communists themselves.

Both the theory and practice of Communism show exactly what is meant by the grim joke that "all citizens are equal before the law." Article 64, for instance, states that :

The right of voting, and of being elected to the Soviets, belongs to all citizens of the R.S.S.R. without distinction of sex, religion, or nationality, or any residential qualification, provided that on the day of the election they have reached the age of eighteen, and are in one of the following categories : (*a*) All those who earn their living by productive work useful to society, and those engaged in domestic work, occupations which enable the former to follow their callings ; workers and employees of all kinds, whether in industry, commerce, or agriculture, etc. ; peasants and agricultural cossacks who do not employ others for their private gain ; (*b*) soldiers of the army and navy.

It will be noted that every one who "employs labour," even if the nature of his calling be such that it is impossible for him to earn his living without assistance, is disfranchised ; and that, in the absence of any definition, electoral officials are left to decide just what work is or is not "useful to society." A carpenter, if there is nothing against him, will have a vote ; but the draper who engages an assistant, and sells the carpenter his clothes, will just as certainly be disqualified as a parasite.

But the Constitution goes much further than this. Article 65 provides that :

The following have neither the right to vote nor to be elected, even if they are within one of the above-mentioned categories : (*a*) Those who employ others for the sake of profit ; (*b*) those who receive an income not arising from their own work, interest on capital, industrial enterprises, landed property, etc. ; (*c*) private business men, agents, middlemen, etc. ; (*d*) monks and priests of all religious denominations ; (*e*) late agents and employees of the old police, special constabulary, and secret service, and also members of the late

ruling dynasty ; (*f*) maniacs and imbeciles ; (*g*) persons convicted of infamous or mercenary crimes during a period fixed by law or by the sentence of the Court.

When you realize how elastic are some of these clauses, and the infinite number of loopholes that they leave for victimization, it is not surprising that only a small percentage of the population of the cities has even the first essential to freedom and equality—a voice in the government of the country.

Not that the disfranchised majority miss very much. Despite the vague phrases of the Constitution, candidates must all be approved by the Communist party, and the electors, in actual practice, have the choice of either voting for them or not voting at all. To vote against the Communist nominees when there are no alternative candidates is quite useless, and (seeing that every paper must bear the voter's name) just a little unwise.

Not only in the matter of the franchise, but in every phase and activity of life you find this same iron autocracy, the same humbling of the majority by a small ruling caste. This caste is made up of such manual workers as happen to belong to the Communist party. They are the aristocrats of Russia to-day, none the less autocratic because they wear blue shirts. They alone enjoy the fullest rights and privileges of citizenship. They alone can be appointed to high office, political, civil, or military ; they have votes, whereas the average man—the butcher or the baker—has not ; if they are unemployed they can demand work or a dole and be sure of satisfaction ; if they want housing they can get it, and on much better terms than anyone else ; they have preference in the hospitals ; their children will be admitted to the schools and

universities, even if (as has happened recently) other children have to be thrown out to make room for them ; and they have all sorts of other advantages over inferior beings about whom there is no halo of manual labour. Sitting in secret conclave (for the Communist party is for all practical purposes the Government of Russia) they can pass laws that to less fortunate people mean life or death ; they can push a friend into a Government position ; and their power is so enormous that the unsupported word of one of them is usually sufficient to have a man or woman imprisoned as a suspect and possibly exiled to some frozen waste within the Arctic Circle.

Why does not everybody join this all-powerful organization for the sake of its obvious advantages ? The reply is that, with the exception of certain leading revolutionaries, only manual workers are eligible. Even the peasants, who constitute four-fifths of the population, and who could only as a grim and sorry jest be referred to as capitalists, are patronizingly referred to as "allies" only, and are debarred from membership. The Communist party is as exclusive in its way as a West End club, and is admitting new members so slowly and reluctantly that it is becoming more and more what a lawyer would call a close corporation. At present its membership is 700,000. Compare this figure with the total population of Soviet Russia, and you arrive at the amazing fact —amazing to us, that is ; to the superior Communist it seems quite natural—that 130,000,000 of people are ruled by about half of one per cent. of their number. Such is democracy as interpreted in Moscow.

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### III. The Collapse of Communism

Early in my investigations I found this curious paradox. Communism had definitely and disastrously failed ; and yet there never was a time when the more violent Communists enjoyed more absolute and autocratic power. The policy of moderation which almost put Russia on her feet was dead, and there had been a great (though almost unnoticed) swing-back to the principles of reaction.

I talked to Red leaders, and found that they were rather sensitive about the subject of Communism. They would not admit that the system had failed, and assured me that in due course—they were rather vague about the date—Communism would be reintroduced in its purest form. Russia, it appeared, would then be ready to pass into the final and ideal stage, when the use of money and all other features of the capitalist system would be abolished, and the whole race, inspired by the ideals of Lenin, would be content to work for the common good without any sordid consideration of financial gain.

The answer is that the experiment has already had a four years' trial and been received by the great mass of the Russian people with singular lack of enthusiasm. Communism was introduced in 1917, and by 1921, after its first and only trial by a great nation on a great scale, had utterly and finally collapsed. The levies on the unhappy peasant for the feeding of the army and the cities had grown till he was losing eighty or ninety per cent. of his produce ; and, rebelling at last, he began to produce only enough to feed himself and his family. The result was such an alarming fall-

ing-off in production that the country was threatened with famine and the whole Soviet system with destruction.

So much is admitted by Radek. "Soviet Russia," he says, "was compelled to return to the positions of the October revolution, whose limits—compelled by civil war—it often overstepped. It had to abandon the system of requisitions, which system had left the peasants with nothing but the bare minimum for maintaining life." And Radek goes on to make an admission which strikes at the very foundation of Communism. "The fact that the whole of the surplus of the peasant's labour was taken from him," he says, "destroyed every incentive to produce more than the quantity necessary for him to live on. The solution of the requisitions problem by means of a tax in kind, with permission to trade with the remaining portion, was not only a concession to the dissatisfaction of the peasants which expressed itself in the winter and spring of 1921, but was the means of strengthening the peasant economy, which is the first condition to reconstruction."

The results of the new economic policy obviously surprised the Red leaders, but were only what might have been expected—an immediate increase in production, the springing up of private trade, and all the other symptoms of the growth of a healthy economic system. Concessions were granted to foreign firms on a 51–49 per cent. basis, the Soviet retaining the controlling interest; and there was every indication that the next few years would see a return to something like pre-war prosperity.

Then came the reaction. The Communists, fearful that the growth of commerce meant a

return to bourgeois capitalism, attacked the new policy in the councils of the Communist party—the real governing power of Russia—and there began a swing-back which has constantly gathered force until at the present time the reactionary is undisputed master. All sorts of restrictions were imposed on private trade. Men accused of having speculated or made exorbitant profits were imprisoned or shot. "Nepmen"—that is, traders under the N.E.P. or new economic policy—were taxed with increasing severity. More and more shops were taken over by the State, until now you see the word "Tresta" (trust) on the windows of almost every large concern. Foreigners were harassed by restrictions, regulations, and espionage to such an extent that they either abandoned their concessions or are carrying on in the vague hope that they will some day begin to pay. (I doubt whether one foreign concern in ten is making a reasonable profit.) And when new concessions were sought the authorities raised so many objections that hardly one deal of any importance went through.

The Soviet leaders were (and are still) divided in their attitude towards this vital problem, sometimes with the curious results that followed the negotiations conducted by Mr. Leslie Urquhart on behalf of Russo-Asiatica Ltd., in September, 1922. That company, in which Krupps' and other big foreign capitalists are interested, as well as thousands of British shareholders, acquired property in Russia before the war valued at £56,000,000. It had a mining concession over 2,500,000 acres, built 2,500 miles of railway, acquired iron mines, blast furnaces, steel works, cyanide and gold mills, bullion refineries, dynamite and sulphuric acid

plants, twenty-nine saw-mills and a river-fleet, employed 50,000 men, and provided houses, schools, and hospitals for 250,000 persons.

As a result of confiscation by the Soviet the whole enormous industry was killed. Some of the Moscow leaders had sense enough to realize that there was no hope of reviving it until the original management was restored, and Mr. Krassin, the Commissar for Foreign Trade, entered into negotiations with Mr. Urquhart and the other directors. The result was an agreement which was hailed with jubilation as a victory over the capitalist and "the first of a big series" of concessions that would bring employment and "enlarge the ranks of the Russian proletariat." The Council of Commissars, at the bidding of the Communist party, promptly refused to ratify the agreement, and a resourceful Government proclaimed that once again a smashing victory had been gained over the forces of capitalism!

The men who stifled this and every other enterprise are still in control. To lend money or offer unsecured credits while they remain, and expect a fair reward, surely savours of optimism. Time and again I heard the proposed British loan discussed in Russia, and always with mirth or contempt for our folly. The prevailing view was that expressed in a newspaper cartoon. An asinine John Bull was shown arriving with swollen moneybags, and below was the line, "We will take his money, but he will not get back his factories." Quite frankly, also, the Russian newspapers, which are all under Soviet management, boasted that once England had parted with her millions she could whistle for the interest.

Even if the Soviet Government were willing to

stand by its obligations, it is difficult to point to any asset by which a loan could be secured, or a source of revenue which would ensure the payment of interest. Some people tell you that Russia is solvent, and point to the stability of the rouble as evidence ; but it is possible that they do not know just how that stability was attained.

To understand Russia's finances to-day you have to go back to 1921, when the Moscow leaders, after keeping the printing presses working day and night for years, found that the chaos of the currency was menacing the very existence of the Government, and that the day of reckoning could be postponed no longer. Towards the end of 1921 it was decided to curtail the issue of paper money, and in the following year the Government went further and issued, for the first time, a currency backed by gold, foreign currency, and commercial securities. The " chervonetz," representing the value of a former 10-rouble gold piece, or almost exactly one guinea, and secured (according to official statements) to the extent of over 50 per cent. by metal and foreign currency, jumped into immediate popularity, and within a very short time the old depreciated paper had completely disappeared. To-day you can travel through Russia from Vladivostock to Leningrad and see nothing but chervontzy ; and the value of the new currency, measured by the pound sterling and the dollar, has remained astonishingly steady.

The stabilization of the currency was hailed, of course, as a triumph for the Soviet Government in general and for Sokolnikoff, the Commissar for Finance, in particular ; and the coup really was rather clever. The Soviet Government rigidly controlled all foreign trade, arranged that there

should always be a surplus of exports over imports —in 1923 the balance was nearly 62,000,000 gold roubles in favour of Russia—and in payment for this surplus refused to accept anything but its own notes. The result was a constant demand for the chervonetz and its stabilization, both within and without the country, as a monetary unit.

But this result was achieved only by half strangling the country's foreign trade. In other words, the apparent stability of the Soviet's finances, is not derived, as it should be, from a sound and flourishing economic system, but is an artificial condition based mainly upon the decrees of Moscow. I do not suggest, as some do, that financial difficulties will bring about the Government's collapse, for Russia has survived too much since 1917 to go under now. But I think it is fair to say that, judged by any tests an economist would apply, the country's finances would not justify a business man in advancing credits unless he had goods as security or some other end to serve.

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## IV. The Fall of Trotsky

Just what will be the result of the death of the new liberalism of 1921, and the country's return, at the bidding of the triumphant Communists, to the principles of reaction, is a subject on which one can only speculate. But the great swing-back has already had certain definite and tremendous consequences—amongst them, the fall of Trotsky.

I went to Russia believing, as every foreigner did, that Trotsky was the dominating figure in the Soviet Councils and the natural successor, in fact if not actually in law, to the dead leader Lenin. The outside world not only accepted Trotsky

as the outstanding personality of the revolution but had almost come to believe that he *was* the revolution, so completely was he identified with its whole development from the first dramatic blow in October, 1917, to the final triumph of the Red armies, some four years later, over the Whites and their foreign allies in the South and the Far East. Lenin, as the visionary, austere, fanatical but honest, who tried to establish a new way of life on a foundation of Marxian communism, will probably always be regarded as the genius of the revolution. But it needed something more than idealism to build up a new Government on the ruins of the old, and to carry the country through anarchy to order; and it was Trotsky who supplied the organizing ability and driving force without which the Red programme would have collapsed.

It is with justice, therefore, that the world brackets Trotsky with Lenin as one of the two great figures—sinister if you like, but none the less impressive—who contrived to ride the whirlwind and, in some fashion, to direct the storm. If Lenin was Russia's Robespierre and Marat rolled into one, Trotsky was the Soviet's Carnot, the resolute, iron-willed man of action, the Organizer of Victory.

This being so, I expected to find Trotsky, now that Lenin is dead, looming larger than ever in Russia's politics and exercising increasing authority and influence over the course of her affairs.

I soon found that I was wrong. People talked of Zinovieff, the president of the Third Communist Internationale; of Stahlin, the secretary of the same sinister organization; of Djerzinsky, the head of the G.P.U. or Cheka, the dreaded secret service of the Reds; and of Boukharin, a powerful

member of the central executive of the Communist Party. But one seldom heard Trotsky's name and it was apparent even to an outsider that the revolutionary leader was for some reason under a cloud.

Before long I learned why. Just as the leaders of the French Revolution one by one were crushed by the machine they had helped to build, so Trotsky fell foul of the other members of the central executive of the Communist Party. A man of immense courage, original mind and dynamic personality, he declined to be disciplined by the party bosses and insisted on the right to free speech, not, of course, for the general public, but for certain privileged persons, including himself, in the secret assemblies of the party.

The party stuck out for rigid control and the principle that the members of the central committee should speak as one ; and in the end the machine broke Trotsky just as it had broken lesser men before him. Trotsky ceased to attend the meetings of the executive, except on rare occasions ; and before long, though he was still nominally Commissar for War, his work was handed over to a subordinate, Michael Frunze. This official has carried on ever since, while Trotsky, living in retirement, most of the time in a large country house near Moscow, watches developments and bides his time.

The Central Council, naturally enough, was anxious not to advertise this dramatic split and all sorts of elaborate subterfuges were adopted to account for Trotsky's absence from his post. He was sent on a prolonged health trip to the Crimea, invited to look into affairs in the provinces, and so on, but at last even the dullest could not help

perceiving that there had been some sort of crisis and that it had ended in Trotsky's fall.

No one who has followed the great Jew leader's career can suppose that he will be content to remain in retirement indefinitely. By right of ability, leadership and achievement he is by far the greatest figure in Red Russia, and he is still the hero of the army and the more moderate Bolsheviks. In Government offices, barracks, prisons, railway stations, business premises, shop windows, everywhere you turn, you see that unforgettable face, with its untidy shock of hair, piercing black eyes, eagle nose and cruel mouth, alongside the pictures of Lenin. In the Army, too, his influence is tremendous, for Trotsky, callous and merciless though he is, knows how to make himself popular with his troops and has many of the qualities of a born leader of men—an iron will, unshakable resolution, tireless energy and a courage that never falters.

"I hate everything that Trotsky stands for," an Englishman said to me in Moscow. "But, to give the devil his due, he is as brave as a lion."

And Trotsky has other qualities and assets that lift him head and shoulders above his fellows and make it unthinkable that he should end his career in comparative obscurity. He is an intellectual with a keen if not massive brain, a journalist and propagandist of real brilliance, and an orator of tremendous power. A Russian who had lived sixteen years in America and made a point of listening to William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Eugene Debs and other famous "spell-binders," told me that Trotsky was by far the greatest orator he had ever heard. Though he is not a tall man, he has a commanding platform presence, and even when you disagree most violently with his views, it

is impossible not to admire his eloquence and the picturesque sweep of the arm that harmonizes so well with the sweep of his phrases.

What the near future may bring forth is beyond prophecy, but as I write Trotsky is still a man to reckon with. It is an open secret that when the break came between him and the machine, more than one of his opponents feared that he would attempt some sort of coup and, what is more, pull it off. And though he accepted his defeat and made no move, the party leaders would be blind indeed if they did not see a ceaseless menace in the brilliant and embittered Jew who stands outside their Councils and awaits his opportunity.

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## V. The Reign of Terror

It is one of the inconsistencies of Bolshevism that while good easy folk in Birmingham and Auckland and Capetown insist that there is not, and never was, a terror system in Russia, the Reds of Moscow not only admit that terrorism has been deliberately practised, but justify it on the grounds of expediency and frankly admit that they are ready to resort to it again at the first sign of opposition.

"The dictatorship of the proletariat must remain ready to return to terror," declares Karl Radek; and Trotsky himself has repeatedly sneered at those of his supporters—mostly intellectuals—who wanted less blood and "sighed about the cruelty and destructive tendency" of the revolution.

The Government's policy is well defined by Radek.

"The proletariat was able to achieve this end (the defence of the new order) only because it seized

all the material resources of the bourgeoisie, united all these resources in the iron hands of the Soviet Government and succeeded, by a ruthless application of terror, in securing the interior," he says. " The dictatorship of the proletariat, which is exercised through the dictatorship of the Communist Party "—an interesting admission in view of constant denials that the Soviet Government and the Communist Party are one and the same—" can change its methods, it can turn from the terror of the bitterest civil war to revolutionary legality. But it must be the protecting organ of the Proletarian State, and must remain ready to return to terror if the bourgeoisie venture to attempt a new attack on the working class "—or, in other words, if the majority commit the crime of attempting to establish majority rule.

Good people who believe, as I did, that Communism implies some sort of democracy, would do well to study Radek a little further. They will then learn, from a source which can hardly be described as hostile, some elementary truths about the theory and practice of Bolshevism. They will realize that the reign of terror affects not only the remnants of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, but every individual, however radical, democratic and poor, who does not accept without question the principles of the Third Internationale.

I do not mean, of course, that every man who dislikes Bolshevism in his heart is being persecuted. To gaol or exile millions is beyond the capacity of even the zealous Cheka. But it may be said, quite fairly, that the grave or prison doors are yawning for the man who speaks his mind publicly. If he were rash enough to preach in Moscow the views that he fancies so advanced, the average British

Socialist would soon find himself behind bars or meditating somewhere near the White Sea.

The Communist leaders are quite ready to defend their system, and there is a certain amount of logic in their case. Nothing but a cast-iron autocracy, they say, can save the achievements of the revolution from the counter-attacks of the bourgeoisie.

" The Menshevik (Minority Socialists) and Social Revolutionary parties . . . demand freedom for all Socialist parties, among whom they count themselves," Radek says. " If this freedom were granted to them, they would become an organization centre for the rich peasants "—a subtle jest which only those who have travelled through rural Russia can fully appreciate—" and the petty bourgeoisie, and in addition to that, a legal centre of organization for the great bourgeoisie which has proved often enough that it knows how to subordinate the petty bourgeois organizations. . . . The party of the proletariat must therefore defend its dictatorship against the demands of the petty bourgeois parties, for to allow the organization of the petty bourgeoisie would constitute the greatest danger to the achievements of the October revolution. . . . The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries appeal to the Constitution with the slogan of ' Free Soviet Elections.' But the Russian proletariat and the Communist Party cannot permit the Soviet Constitution to be forged into a weapon for the destruction of the Soviet Power and the abolition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . . The dictatorship of the proletariat must remain ready to return to terror."

Actually there can be no question of a return to terror, for the simple reason that it has never been abolished. Georgia, which has a perfect right

under the constitution to secede from the union, was crushed by the Red army during the very month I was in Moscow ; and thanks to the activities of the G.P.U. (the Cheka, or secret service, under another name), anyone who shows signs of independent views goes to exile or to death long before he can organize a party. Even if he did start a movement, there is always the Red Army ready to suppress what Moscow calls counter-revolutionary propaganda and the rest of the world calls liberty.

Then why, if the Red regime be unpopular, does it still endure after seven years ? The answer is that the Communist Party is the only organization in Russia which has the right to meet and express its views. It knows what it wants, which is more than can be said of most " Whites." It controls the army. And it has a tremendous asset in the ignorance and lethargy of the vast majority of the Russian people. One section, mainly city workers, likes Red rule. The illiterate peasant does not greatly care who rules as long as he is left to cultivate his little patch of land in peace. The rest, suffering but inarticulate, accept the commands of the privileged caste because these commands are enforced by the police and the secret service, and backed up, if necessary, by the bayonets of the Red army.

An autocracy such as that of Moscow is inevitably more cruel than a single ruler's dictatorship. Even the worst of tyrants has moments of generosity, and, having only himself to please, is not afraid to indulge them. But where every decision is arrived at by a committee each official watches the others like a cat, dare not take a lenient view for fear that the whisper will go round that " Com-

rade So-and-So is weakening," and, to save his own position and skin, keeps urging on the others to greater severity.

This, and a natural surging up of hatred after centuries of oppression, account for the severity and vindictiveness of Bolshevik law. Spies are everywhere, correspondence is read, no one knows when his home will be raided and searched, citizens are liable to arrest without explanation or trial, and there is no jury system to ensure even rough justice. The slightest indication of independent thought may be interpreted as sign of counter-revolutionary propaganda, for which the penalty is death; and anyone who tries to earn a meagre living by acting as a guide, interpreter or typist for a foreigner is in some danger of being suspected of espionage. It is seven years now since the revolution, and vindictiveness can no longer be excused on the ground of expediency. But men and women who have had the misfortune to come under suspicion are still being sentenced to imprisonment, exile or death, often without even the tragic farce that the Reds call a trial; and men and women, even young girls, are still being exiled to frozen wastes within the Arctic Circle. In these primitive fishing villages, where semi-darkness prevails throughout the nine-months-long winter, where the only food obtainable is raw fish and a sort of crude oatmeal, and the mail, at best, comes once a month, their life is a living death.

The authorities even went so far as to arrest thirty-five employees, mainly girls, of the American Relief Administration, that wonderful organization which, according to the Soviet Government, saved one million Russian lives during the appalling Volga famine. The charges were all flimsy, but

the climax was reached when the mother of one unfortunate girl—a typist who had worked night and day and risked death in the typhus-ridden districts of the South—learned, after persistent inquiry, that her daughter was imprisoned for "unconscious or inadvertent espionage."

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### VI. Bolshevik Justice

I found much to marvel at in Russia, but nothing quite so strange as the judicial system and prisons. While in Moscow I had the privilege, very rarely granted to a foreigner, of going through three large prisons and of hearing the Government's methods expounded by the head of the Prison Department —an olive-skinned, black-eyed fellow, alert, vigorous and, like every other official I met, exceedingly courteous; and at the end of the day I was quite prepared to agree with him that the system was unlike any other in the world.

"The Soviet Government does not believe in capital punishment and has abolished the death sentence—except, of course, for very serious offences," the official told me. "We class crimes as follows"—and he ticked them off on his fingers —"(1) Counter-revolutionary propaganda—penalty, death; (2) espionage—penalty death; (3) murder—maximum sentence ten years; and (4) minor offences."

He obviously saw nothing strange in a code which executes a man for criticizing the Government and lets off a murderer with a penalty that cannot exceed ten years' imprisonment and in actual practice is seldom more than four or five; and I believe that he was genuinely proud of the system's other beauties. He told me that as far as

possible the authorities had closed the old gaols and were using monasteries and other institutions instead. The prisoners—provided that they were not political offenders and dreadful people like that—were allowed free use of the gardens and grounds; the gates were not locked; the prisoners had their own theatre and orchestra; and each prison was governed by a Soviet to which the prisoners elected delegates who sat side by side with the officials.

All this was quite interesting, but better was to come. His black eyes shining with enthusiasm, the official told me that each prisoner was allowed from seven days' to one month's holiday each year, the length of the holiday depending not on the crime, but on the behaviour of the criminal.

This means (though he did not say so) that a petty thief who does not curry favour with his gaolers may receive a week's leave or none at all, while a really nicely behaved murderer will be at liberty for a full month each year and will, in addition, probably have his sentence reduced to three or four years.

This was impressive enough, but the informative Bolshevik, with true artistry, had reserved the climax for the last.

Every inmate of Russia's 400 prisons, he said, was paid the rates received by trades unionists outside. Sixty-five per cent. of his earnings was handed directly to the prisoner, 25 per cent. was deducted by the Government for board and lodging, and the remaining 10 per cent. was held over as a bonus to be presented when he was finally discharged from the benevolent institution.

"People talk about the dreadful conditions in our prisons," he concluded complacently. "I could show you many letters in which prisoners tell

us how sorry they would be to leave. Is not that proof of the excellence of our prisons ? "

"Some people," I suggested mildly, "might regard it as rather a reflection on conditions outside."

But judging by the expression on the face of the great man and his fellow-communists, I fear that this view was not popular.

I had the privilege of reading a number of these unsolicited testimonials to the comfort and homelike atmosphere of the Red prisons. There was not the slightest proof of their authenticity—nothing to show that they were not written in the office by some industrious clerk, or dictated at the point of the bayonet. Nor, to me, did it matter very much. It was not of much consequence to the world even if the leader of the Minority Socialists really had written to his people expressing deep regret that they could not share the luxuries of his prison. The point was this : Why, in a land of liberty, a " Union of Socialist Soviet Republics," was he in prison at all ? Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution promise to all citizens " effective liberty of opinion," " complete freedom of meeting " and " full liberty of association." Why, then, should a man—and not a Capitalist or a Conservative, mind you, but a Socialist—go to gaol because he ventures to speak through his own mouth instead of through the Communist machine ? Why should he lose his liberty for demanding what the Constitution definitely promises ? And why should others, infinitely more wretched, be cast into those dread strongholds of the secret service, the Lubianka and the Butirka, or exiled to the Urals or the White Sea ?

We who live under British institutions rightly

regard trial by jury as the corner-stone of justice and the first essential to the security of the individual. The Russian has no such safeguard. There is no guarantee that any open charge will be made or that he will be tried at all before being sentenced ; and even if he is, the courts, in political cases, are the instruments of the G.P.U. The average judge is a mere creature of the Government, holding office just so long as he pleases his masters ; and, to make sure that he looks on things from the right point of view, the law ordains that he shall sit with a Communist workman acting in much the same capacity as one of our assessors.

How the system works in practice may be judged from the experience of a British business man I met in Moscow. He brought a civil action, the evidence was heard by the judge and the inevitable workman, and the parties anxiously awaited a verdict. Several days went by without result, and the Englishman approached the Court and asked the reason for the delay. The judge explained, almost with tears, that the workman was required to do only six days' judicial work a year—hardly enough, one would think, to keep him in form—and having served his term, could not be compelled to come back and deliver his verdict.

" Well, what are you going to do about it ? " demanded the frantic and irritated Englishman.

The judge shrugged his shoulders.

The interview with the prison director at an end, I was handed over to an officer—a big, genial, likeable fellow who was once an officer in the Czar's army—and conducted through three of the largest Moscow prisons. They were not the prisons I particularly wanted to see. What I should have liked was an opportunity to see how the Reds treated

political offenders at the Butirka and Lubianka. But even the three prisons to which I was admitted left me with memories that will never fade.

Drawing up outside what was once a monastery, we were met by a middle-aged, blue-shirted man, with a serious but kindly face, who turned out to be the Governor of the gaol. My escort and the Governor saluted each other ceremoniously, shook hands and exchanged compliments. Then the gates closed behind us with a dismal clang and we walked across a courtyard into a workroom where prisoners were engaged at long benches.

"Under our new system every one is taught some trade," proudly explained the Governor, who was evidently quite unaware that the same thing is done in many parts of the world not blessed with Bolshevik rule. "We also teach the illiterate to read and write"—another excellent though not novel idea—"and we provide them with this library, including books in English."

And he pointed to seventeen tattered English books, most of them old periodicals and faded yellow-back novels of the era of Miss Braddon and Mrs. Hungerford. The official in charge of their literary diet could not be accused of feeding them on raw meat.

I examined the kitchen and the catering arrangements (all controlled by the prisoners), was presented with bread, oatmeal, boot polish and other products of the prison factory, listened to the prison orchestra, mostly composed of "Whites," ironically playing the "International," and at last found myself in the long corridors off which lay the prisoners' cells.

Small and bare they were, neither very dirty nor very clean—the bedclothes looked grey and grubby

—and not badly overcrowded. The prisoners were of many types and from many provinces, and had been convicted of all manner of offences.

"Oh, I tried to make a bit at the expense of the Government," said one intelligent-looking young fellow jauntily, when my escort asked him what he was in for.

"Same offence," remarked his older neighbour briefly.

The question was put to a third prisoner, a sullen-looking lout with unshaven face, broad, high cheek-bones and small, deep-set eyes, but he did not answer. A warder repeated the question sharply and this time there came a prompt reply.

"Murder," said the warder laconically. I asked what was his sentence and was informed that he had done two years and would be at liberty in another eighteen months. Three and a half years for killing a fellow-being! But then, as the head of the administration had already pointed out, murder was not one of the really serious offences. Judging by the number of murderers I discovered undergoing sentences of five years and less one might go a little further and say that in Red Russia a lust for blood is a harmless eccentricity, and homicide, in the phrase of Oscar Wilde, the mere mannerism of a clique.

Others were not so fortunate. In one cell I noticed a man of about thirty, with a clean-cut, intelligent face, reading a religious treatise in Latin. He was a priest, he told me, and had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment on a charge of counter-revolutionary activity. His cell-mates were also priests and had been convicted of the same offence. Calmly, and with a fine dignity, the first man assured me that they had no connection with

politics, had no desire to stir up trouble, and had been imprisoned after the merest pretence at a trial. Whether he spoke the truth I cannot say, but I liked his grave, cleanly moulded face, fine forehead and steady eyes.

In the second male prison I found a score more men whose faces and personalities burned themselves into my memory. Two, in particular, rise before me now. They were young airmen, one French, the other Hungarian. They denied any connection with anti-Bolshevik organizations, but admitted, with a brave attempt at philosophical indifference, that their chance of convincing the authorities of their innocence was rather slim. They looked worn and pathetically thin, and one poor fellow was in an advanced stage of tuberculosis. But, true to their training and breed, they still shaved and washed as punctiliously as if dining that night in their mess, and when I left them with some poor expression of sympathy and good-will they waved as gaily as if passing a friend in Hyde Park.

Even more touching was the plight of some of the inmates of the women's prison. There I found scores of women, dirty and unkempt, squatting on the bare earth of the courtyard. Their ages ranged from about seventeen to seventy, they were almost in rags and their legs and feet were bare. Some of them were using a needle—for they are allowed to sell their work; but owing to the slackening of the demand the long line of sewing-machines were idle beneath their dusty calico coverings.

I talked to some of these women and discovered, with a shock of surprise and pain, that amongst them was an Englishwoman. She had lost her

nationality by marrying a Russian many years ago, and was consequently beyond the aid of the British Government ; but she was an Englishwoman none the less, and it was very moving to see her in the grip of the Reds. She admitted that she had broken the law. She had seven children and no husband, she told me, and to make a little money she illicitly distilled liquor. The police caught her and she was sentenced to two years' imprisonment —a savage penalty when her age, sex and poverty are taken into account, and when one remembers that the average murderer does not fare much worse.

But she faced the future bravely and had only one complaint—the authorities would not allow her to see an oculist. Under the humanitarian Soviet regime a convicted assassin may have a month's leave, but a feeble old woman is not allowed to walk up the street and buy the glasses without which she cannot read or sew.

There was nothing I could do for her, poor old soul, and I realized how empty any words of sympathy or encouragement would sound. But she thanked me as if I had done her a real service, and shook hands in farewell with a brave smile in her faded eyes that haunts me still.

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## VII. Russia's Peasant President

The death of Lenin and the fall of Trotsky have deprived the Soviet Government of its only great figures. To-day the destinies of Russia are in the hands of two classes of politician—the figure-heads whose popularity with the masses makes them useful to the men behind the scenes, and the organizers and schemers, mostly unknown

outside Russia, who control the party machine.

The first sort make most of the speeches and represent their country abroad with what grace they can muster. The others, working always in secret, decide everything that matters and see to it that each puppet jumps when they pull the string.

In the first class is Kalinin, the honest, kindly workman who has risen to what is nominally the highest post in the republic. Of humble peasant origin, Kalinin went to the city as a youth, worked at a number of trades and occupations, and so now, unlike the average peasant, is a fully qualified member of the working-class proletariat.

Kalinin is not an outstanding figure. He is not one of those born leaders whom men instinctively turn to in great crises; he has had no training in statecraft, and even now probably knows little of its theory or practice; he is not noted as an organizer; and he has no great gift of speech. How, then, did he reach his present position, and how has he managed to stay there?

The explanation is that no nation likes to be governed by a machine and that in Russia, more than in most countries, it is essential that the people should have at least a semblance of personal rule. There may come a day when politics will be divorced from personalities and men will be given power, not because of their winning smile or some such trick as Theodore Roosevelt's "Bully for you, boys!" but because a dispassionate survey leaves the impression that they will make honest and efficient administrators. But no country has yet approached that stage, least of all Russia. Four-fifths of the people of Russia are illiterate, superstitious and essentially

conservative peasants to whom the late Czar really was the Little Father, something less than God but distinctly higher than man. The Czars gone, the people needed some sort of substitute, and the Red Government shrewdly installed Kalinin as a figure-head to whom the poor and the suffering could turn for sympathy and help.

The experiment has worked well. The people feel to-day that, just as they once had the right to see the Czar, so they may rely on the President receiving them and listening to their petitions, however lowly the status of the petitioner and however trivial his grievance.

While in Moscow I called on the President, and was received by a secretary with a tousled head and a blue shirt which gaped wide open and showed half his chest. He asked me where Australia was, and when his remarkably pretty typist and I had jointly explained, asked me whether it was "one of the Malay Islands," and whether it was full of savages. The point of this latter question, as I discovered later, lay in the fact that the Third Internationale was just then considering a request from negroes that they should be given representation in the party. Had I been able to assure him that I represented millions of rebellious coloured men I should probably have been welcomed with enthusiasm; but when I pointed out that Australia had only 50,000 or 60,000 aborigines, and that they were fast dying out, he suddenly lost interest in me and began to talk vaguely about an appointment with his chief next week.

But I was able, without his assistance, to learn something of Kalinin and his methods, and the strange atmosphere in which the peasant

leader works. His waiting-rooms, the corridors, even the pavement outside, were packed with men and women, and the whole building reeked with the smell of sheepskin, high leather boots and unwashed bodies.

All were poorly dressed; some in greasy sheepskin jackets, some almost in rags. There were some who lacked an arm or a leg. Two or three swung a foot enveloped in dirty bandages. A man with a long grey beard felt his way blindly along the wall. A paralytic, with enormous effort, pulled himself around by his arms, all the while making facial contortions that were horrible to see. The head of one man shook so violently that you felt it must soon fall off. And there was another, with great staring eyes and the lower part of his face blown away, who looked like some monstrous bird.

All these, and scores of others whose faces spoke of trouble or ill-health, were seeking an audience with Kalinin, each with his own prayer for the President's sympathy and assistance. One wanted a horse; another could find neither work to do nor land to till; a third, an old and feeble woman, had lost her only son in the Revolutionary War, and being unable to work any longer, asked for a small pension. And although it might mean an all-day wait, each could be sure that eventually Kalinin would see him. Hardly ever did the interview last more than one or two minutes; but all went away a little comforted by the thought that the President himself had heard their grievances and promised investigation, perhaps assistance.

Working in such an atmosphere and to such an end, Kalinin, naturally enough, is acquiring all

kinds of virtues in the eyes of the simple Russian peasant and is fast becoming a sort of legend of wisdom and charity. It is one of the paradoxes of a curious land that this mantle of the Romanoffs should have descended on a man like Kalinin —that the peasant, Communist and revolutionary, whose creed ordains that he should reject God, despise the Church and spurn tradition, now finds himself living in a semi-spiritual atmosphere and looked up to with not a little of the respect and reverence which once were the heritage of the Czars.

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**VIII. The Moujik's Awakening**

If Bolshevism has done nothing else it has made a nation think. In every field of activity in Russia you find restless experiment, constant change and a vague groping after a workable economic system and a new way of life.

Nowhere is the discontent with the present order more marked than amongst the conservative people of the land. Rural Russia is in a stage of transition and is undergoing not only the troubles incidental to the change but a fresh crop produced by governmental folly. The peasant who was promised the millennium when the Revolution came along finds that with the growing population the land hunger becomes ever more acute, that the burden of taxation is crushingly heavy, and that, so far as his rights in the land are concerned, he has merely exchanged one landlord for another.

The problem of Russia is the problem of a country that has attempted to pass, at one giant stride, from the Middle Ages to modernity.

Millions of peasants alive to-day were born slaves and remember quite clearly the abolition of serfdom in 1861 ; and in spite of all the reform laws issued during the two or three decades before 1917 the feudal system lived on right up to the Revolution. Hereditary noblemen—the number of princes amongst Russia's landowners is really astonishing—owned vast estates ; and even when the serfs were freed sixty-three years ago and given an opportunity to acquire an interest in the land they occupied, the relation between them and their great landlord was not unlike that between the tenants and noblemen of feudal England. They did not, of course, owe the military service and other dues that were expected of every Englishman, great or small, by his immediate overlord, but they regarded the local nobleman with much the same respect, and passively, if not cheerfully, accepted his paternal rule.

The came the Revolution of 1917 with all its dramatic changes.

" By the will of the Workers and Peasants the right of private property in the surface land, underground riches, waters and forests is abolished as from October 26 (November 8, new style), 1917."

So ran the second decree issued by the Revolutionary Council. " From this stock of land," said the official explanation that accompanied the decree, " allotments are granted to groups of toiling agriculturists, to certain localities and to State institutions and enterprises, all of which are to exploit it directly themselves. All the land left in stock after the above allotments have been made constitutes the property of the State, by which it is owned directly. However, such

remaining land may be given away under special conditions to institutions, enterprises, societies and private individuals. Preference is given in this to labour communes and artels (workers' guilds)."

Thus it comes about that the State is the universal landlord. There are, theoretically, no landowners in Russia to-day, but only land-users. "All citizens wishing to cultivate the land with their own labour are granted the land needed," so the official proclamation runs; but it is carefully explained that the "land is not given them as individuals but is given through groupings such as land associations, or associations of land-users."

Every occupier of land must acknowledge the overlordship of the State and must submit to certain very definite restrictions. He must not, for instance, sell or mortgage his holding; and he may not even transfer his own limited rights unless he can prove that he is overcome by famine or some other natural calamity, or called up as a conscript. Every member of his family able to work must do so, and he may not hire labour unless he can show that assistance is absolutely essential.

The relations between the peasant and the State, and between individual peasants, are further complicated by the number and variety of the systems in operation. In one district you find groups of farmers working a certain area on a strictly communal basis—that is, regarding the land as common property, and re-distributing the allotments regularly to ensure equality of opportunity. In another there is the "dvor" type of peasant cultivator, who has definite rights over a certain definite allotment. In a third you find members of a land society cultivating the land in common

and sharing expenses and produce. And in a fourth again all the different forms are mixed. Each community is allowed to choose its own system or to change from one system to another.

It has its appeal to a generous mind, this Utopian conception of a state in which every one lives on the fruit of his own toil. But how does it work in practice?

The answer is that the peasantry, from one end of Russia to the other, are seething with discontent. The peasant was promised land for all, independence, relief from the exactions of his landlord, and a voice in the government of the country. He believed, good simple soul, that if he could only be free of his landlord, prosperity and happiness would automatically follow.

What does he find? He is barred from the Communist Party and the advantages that membership brings. The taxes demanded by the Soviet Government are more oppressive than the rent once levied by the landlord. (Under the communal system, abandoned in 1921, the farmer had to part with such a large proportion of his produce—in some cases 80 or 90 per cent.—that he began to grow barely enough to feed himself and his family, and the whole country was threatened with famine.) Famines are far worse than they used to be, for the reason that the landlord of the old regime could usually advance sufficient capital to tide his tenants over a bad time. And, as a result of the universal poverty and the subdivision of large estates into small allotments, it is no longer possible for the cultivators to use up-to-date farming machinery, artificial manures and the other essentials to efficient farming.

The Russian moujik may be a slow thinker and

he is certainly very ignorant. (Ninety per cent. of the entire population of Russia cannot read or write.) But he is not altogether a fool, and by now he has decided that a satisfactory solution of the land problem is impossible under the present system. He resents the fact that the government of the country is in the hands of urban workers, and is beginning to realize that he and his like, who constitute 80 per cent. of the entire population of Russia, and produce at least nine-tenths of the country's wealth, are carrying on their backs a great horde of non-producers in the cities, as well as the Red Army. From one end of Russia to the other you hear significant rumblings of discontent, and in many districts the feeling is so intense that outrages occur almost daily. *Pravda*, one of the official Bolshevik organs in Moscow, had a leading article on November 14 on " the persistent class wars developing in some villages in connection with the elections for the village Soviets " ; and the same journal, which can hardly be accused of bias against the present order, publishes telegrams reporting innumerable outrages against Bolshevik sympathizers and agents. Soviet journalists and organizers have been murdered, Soviet manifestoes have been torn down, and there have been innumerable other incidents which are, as the *Pravda* admits, " not accidental events but very important social phenomena." There is, of course, a certain section in the rural districts which believes in Bolshevik rule ; but the discontent amongst the great majority is becoming so serious that even the Red leaders are beginning to realize that their system is built upon a smouldering volcano.

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## IX. The Reds' Dream of Power

There was a time—and many still alive can remember it—when British statesmen regarded Russia as the natural enemy, and our outposts kept ceaseless vigil on the passes of the North-West Frontier. Then Germany, and later still Japan, rose to military greatness, and during the decade before the war Russia was forgotten.

Now the old spectre has returned. The shadow of Russia again falls across the Himalayas, and once more British rule in India is threatened—this time not by the imperialistic policy of the Czars, but by the aggressiveness and limitless ambition of the Reds. The Soviet leaders are already straining every nerve to conquer the world by propaganda, and the time may come when they will feel able to strike a blow with the sword.

If so, that blow will almost certainly be aimed at India. The Soviet leaders, with reason, regard India as the key to the British Empire, and believe that if our rule there could be destroyed, one of the two great capitalistic Powers would collapse.

But this is as yet a dream. For the time being the Soviet Government is compelled by its own weakness to refrain from any overt act of hostility and fall back upon the subtler and possibly more effective weapon.

Officially, of course, the Soviet authorities know nothing of propaganda in foreign countries, and are grieved if one suggests that by this means they are trying to overthrow capitalist states.

"We do not conduct propaganda," cried one indignant little man at the Foreign Office in

Moscow, throwing out his hands in emphatic gesture. "We do not know of any propaganda. Your suggestion, it is untrue. The Communist Internationale?—ah, yes, perhaps. But the Soviet Government—no, no! They are two distinct organizations, and occupy different buildings."

"Quite so. But is not every Commissar also a Communist?" I asked.

"Of course."

"Then does it not amount to this?" I suggested gently. "Certain gentlemen in Moscow, in their capacity as Communists, attend meetings in one building and decide to start a new campaign in (let us say) Egypt. And then the same gentlemen rush round to another building in their Rolls-Royces, and there, in their capacity as Ministers, compose polite notes assuring the Foreign Powers that they, the central executive of Russia, know nothing of propaganda."

"You have made mistake. That is very wrong. You——"

The little man began to forget his English in his excitement, his hands climbed higher and higher till they were waving round his head, and he was still seeking words to express his opinion of my mistakenness when I averted an international crisis by departing.

But, as one frank Bolshevik pointed out to me, the time may come when Russia will no longer have to fall back upon such weapons as propaganda. In another twenty years Russia in Europe and that great and glorious domain, Siberia, should contain two hundred millions of people.

"All the men of military age," he said, "will by then have been taught in our schools and trained

according to our principles ; and with fifteen or twenty million fighting men to draw upon, who knows what achievements will be within our grasp."

He stopped suddenly, as if regretting that his enthusiasm had carried him so far ; but it was not hard to visualize the triumphs of which the more imaginative Bolsheviks dream. Everywhere they turn now, from Shanghai to Cairo, they run up against the wall of Britain's power. They look forward to the day—and it may not be far distant—when bribery, bluster and intrigue will have linked up China, India, Thibet, Turkestan, Afganistan, Persia, Egypt and the Sudan in one vast polyglot league united by hatred of the common foe. This achieved, they say, the British Empire will crumble into nothingness like the great empires of the past, and the way will be clear for the methodical destruction of the other capitalist states and the conversion of the whole world to Communism.

Some people scoff at the idea of Soviet Russia trying to overrun the world. They tell you that races of different nationality, religion and colour will never come together and work for the same end. But Communism, as practised at Moscow, is essentially a fighting creed. The good Communist, like the good Mohammedan, is a fiery zealot who considers it his " duty " to spread the Gospel and convert the unbeliever ; and if the unbeliever refuses to be converted—well, so much the worse for him. The Eastern section of the Communist Internationale already embraces representatives of such diverse peoples as the Egyptians, Arabs, Turks, Hindus, Tartars, Chinese, Koreans and Japanese, and throughout Asia and

Africa Bolshevism is making rapid progress. Red propaganda has already had its effect in Egypt, the Soudan and India, and in China; what with the efforts of M. Karakhan, Sun Yat-sen and a subsidized press, the young radicals are embracing Bolshevism so fast that another twenty years may see the whole land red. Bolshevism, as the Soviet leaders know, flourishes on starvation and misery and oppression, and it is in Asia that they hope to strike the spark that will set the world in flames.

# CHAPTER XIX

## "CULTURE AND ANARCHY"

Education in Russia—Some Strange Experiments—Pupils who Control their Teachers—Lunacharsky on the Schools' Gloomy Future—The Bolshevik Press—Revolutionary Plays—Stanislavsky and Meierhold—The Actor as Politician—"Bio-Mechanics"—"Beauty is Dead"—Bolshevism and Art—Treasures carefully Preserved—Communism and Religion—Crowded Churches—An Impressive Service—Making Atheists of Children—"Why Should we Marry?"

WITH the overthrow of the Czarist regime, the leaders of Bolshevik Russia had perhaps the most tremendous opportunity that man has known. What could be more godlike than this building of a world anew, what stake heavier than the happiness of 130,000,000 people?

But the responsibility fell on the wrong shoulders and the opportunity was terribly misused. The tragedy of Russia to-day is that the Communist, with a practically virgin field to do with as he will, is producing only queer, misshapen and sometimes monstrous growths that spring up in a night like some bloom of a jungle swamp, flourish for an hour, and then as suddenly perish.

You see this morbid growth and this same process of experiment, wild in method and for the most part pitiful in its sterility, going on in art, literature, drama, music, religion, and other phases of Russian life and activity; but it is in the field of education that the Communist finds widest scope

for his theories and derives greatest benefit from his propaganda. Recognizing the vital importance of education in the building up and maintenance of a new social order, the Soviet leaders have devoted special attention to the country's primary and secondary schools and have evolved a system of which they are intensely proud. All the methods and principles of education adopted in some form or other by every civilized country have been discarded as antiquated, and in their place you find a queer medley of Sovietism, pro-communist and anti-religious propaganda, eccentric experiments, interesting novelties, and grotesque processes garnished with meaningless jargon.

I had some opportunity, more especially in Moscow, to see how the system worked. I was invited to see the "forest schools," a University and a number of other institutions, including the "Central Institute of Work," where men are being trained, on strictly new principles, to go out and take charge of workshops.

At the Institute of Work I learned a number of exciting truths. For instance:

"The work of creating a skilled man-power is an elemental process. In its methodologic course it still follows routine craft traditions.

"The tool and muscle work we sub-divide in two groups; stroke operations, with a trained stroke as the leading feature; and pressure operations with, as leading features, a trained pressure motion.

"The machine tool work is sub-divided likewise in two groups; directing operations, being a combination of visual reaction and of pressure motions; and adjusting or setting operations, combining visual reactions with constructive imagination.

"The analysis of chisel-chipping shows that this operation is a stroke-motion system, susceptible of being studied and noted down as a whole or in part.

"Each motion can be definitely connected with a simple reaction and gets corresponding biomotive characteristics."

The principal of the Institute informed me that this system shortened the usual training by years, and added that, until he studied these principles, and the elaborate apparatus and diagrams showing the rise and fall of a hammer, no one could be efficient.

I thought, rather sadly, of Benvenuto Cellini, who was rather vague, poor fellow, about the methodologic stroke-motion system; and it was pathetic to think how Henry Ford had neglected his biomotive characteristics.

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And yet, side by side with the ridiculous and the fanatical, there were things that an educationist would find worth studying. Some of the experiments in what one may call the mechanics of teaching may conceivably yield good results and ultimately influence the practice of other countries; and it would certainly be interesting to see how the introduction of the Soviet system reacts on the children. The position is that every school, like every prison, is a self-governing unit with its own soviet. The pupils elect representatives who sit in council, decide what they will learn and (to a large extent) how they will learn it, and deal with matters of discipline and administration generally. If the council decides that a boy or girl is wasting time or airing obnoxious views, the offender is thrown out; and the same fate awaits the teacher who fails to please his young but autocratic masters.

It is not likely, I suppose, that such a system will be adopted by other nations; but it would be of some value if impartial observers had an oppor-

tunity to learn how the transfer of authority from teachers to pupils is affecting discipline and efficiency, and how the character of the child is developing under such a load of responsibility.

Another noteworthy experiment is the establishment of "forest schools" where weakly children, more especially those suffering from lung troubles, are taught in the open air. The schools are small, and at the present time not 1 per cent. of the children of Moscow could gain admission—a fact that Communists conveniently overlook when they proudly invite visitors like myself to see what the Government is doing for education. Still, small as they are, these forest schools are already doing excellent work and paving the way for great developments in the future—always supposing, of course, that the Government some day has the money to undertake them.

But it is as well to remember that Moscow is the Soviet's shop window, carefully dressed to catch the eye of the impressionable foreigner. In other parts of Russia conditions are so deplorable that even children born in the sacred atmosphere of manual labour are denied the first essentials to an elementary education.

For this I have the authority of M. Lunacharsky, the Commissar for Education, who can scarcely be dismissed as a hostile witness. "For the present, between the desire of the people for good education and the possibility of fulfilling it, there is a great gap," he said in his last report. "The Government has municipalized elementary education, which means that the burden has been shifted on to the shoulders of the local governments. But they are too poor, and have not the means for the support of the schools. In fact, in the rural dis-

tricts the schools are regarded as a burden of which they must rid themselves as soon as possible. The result is that the peasants give practically no money for the schools. The school children are taught in totally neglected buildings, which are rarely heated, making it necessary for the children to sit in their overcoats during the lessons. There is a great scarcity of ordinary school necessities; for example, one lead pencil must be shared between ten pupils. The children have very few books, and many things must be memorized. There is an insufficient number of teachers; in short, there is a lack of everything. Being paid like beggars, the teachers are treated as such by the people, with the result that there has been a general flight from the profession. Most of those who remain in the teaching profession try to solve their economic problems by joining the Communist Party. Thus the situation is as bad as it can be. The number of schools and pupils is diminishing every day."

M. Lunacharsky backs up his gloomy report with some significant and depressing figures. Before the war, he points out, there were 62,000 elementary schools in Russia, with 4,200,000 pupils. With the aid of a publicity campaign in 1921 the number was increased to 76,000 schools, with 6,000,000 pupils. But in the following year a decline began which has continued ever since. In October, 1923, there were only 49,000 schools, with 3,700,000 pupils. The secondary schools had suffered even more severely, while the number of pupils attending the Froebel schools had fallen from 213,000 to 4,000. And M. Lunacharsky forecasts still worse things to come.

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## II. Control of the Press

One of the first steps of the revolutionary leaders was to assume control of the press.

"To assure to the workers effective liberty of opinion, the Russian Soviet Republic puts an end to the dependence of the press upon capital, transfers to the workers and to the peasants all the technical and material resources necessary for the publication of newspapers, pamphlets, books and other printed matter, and guarantees their unobstructed circulation throughout the country."

So runs Article 14 of the Constitution; and, in pursuance of this benign and philanthropic plan every newspaper and printing works was seized throughout the length and breadth of Russia. The press was subsidized and organized as a State department; every post was filled by men—not necessarily journalists—selected by the Government, and (still in the good cause of "effective liberty of opinion," you understand) censors kept a close watch on every proof sheet.

To standardize things still further, and turn the publication of newspapers into a scientific mass-production job, the Government established the "Rosta" press bureau and adopted the Moscow *Izvestia*, or *News*, as its official mouthpiece. The Communist Party, which is for all practical purposes the Government of Russia, took over the *Pravda* (*Truth*), and the two journals run so well in double harness that irreverent and wrong-thinking men say there is no news in the *Truth* and no truth in the *News*.

The control over general literature is just as strict. History must be taught only from the revolutionary standpoint, economics must be Marxian,

and a revolutionary tinge is given even to belles-lettres. In Moscow I was able to buy only the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily News*, and the *Daily Herald*, and the stock of foreign fiction was equally limited—a selection from Jack London (who would probably have defended his beautiful Californian ranch to the death), Upton Sinclair and other so-called revolutionaries.

It is not easy to estimate the full consequences of this rigid State control, but it will certainly have a far-reaching influence on the future of Russia. Bolsheviks, young and old, are too busy studying Communism to bother much about anything else. As I have already related, the Secretary to the President's department in Moscow gravely asked me where Australia was. Another man, a "professor," did not know that Australia took part in the war, and assured me that Russia collapsed on the eastern front (where he himself had fought) because she sent half a million men to France. And a woman thought that Australia's chief city was Vienna.

By such fruits must the Soviet's educational activities be judged.

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### III. Plays and Propaganda

Even as far back as 1905 the Russian revolutionaries realized the importance of the theatre as a medium for propaganda, but it is a curious fact that the Revolution, when it did come, left the stage untouched for a year. By the end of 1918, however, a strict censorship had been established, the Government had formed a "Department for Education Through the Theatre," under Comrade Kel, and the selection and supervision of plays

were entrusted to Communists. Every encouragement was given to the writers of new revolutionary plays, but offerings were few and hardly brilliant, and "while the masterpieces of the Revolution were being written," as one writer naïvely puts it, it was necessary to carry on with the old stock plays. Even here preference was given, where possible, to works depicting strife or satirizing capitalistic society. Hence Molière, Schiller's *Robbers*, selections from Shakespeare, Romain Rolland's *Danton*, Verhæren's *Morgenrot* and Byron's *Cain*.

In 1921 it was decided for some reason—possibly universal boredom—to substitute trained producers for propagandists. Stanislavsky, one of the world's greatest producers, went to the Moscow Art Theatre, and places were found for half a dozen other men, including that restless and eccentric experimentalist, Meierhold. Stanislavsky is getting old now—too old to toy with freak ideas and a new technique. Thanks to his influence, the ban on a certain number of masterpieces was withdrawn, and the Moscow Art Theatre began to attract once more all those who retained their liking for sanity and art, and had money enough to gratify it.

Stanislavsky is regarded as an able and dignified survivor of the past rather than a portent for the future, and it is not he, but Meierhold, who has dominated the Moscow stage since the Revolution. The son of a rich German Jew brewer on the Volga, Meierhold learned his craft under Stanislavsky and became a leading actor. Then, rejecting all the accepted stage conventions and decorations, he broke away from his master and began to offer some of the most extraordinary productions ever seen on any stage. He dressed his players in

uniforms (and sometimes in masks), abolished curtains, tore down the proscenium, built a stage of different levels and threw open the wings and "back stage" to the full view of the audience. His theory was that in this way actors and audiences would be brought into closer touch.

One can follow Meierhold thus far, and the plays he put on during this pre-war period were not without distinction—Maeterlinck's *Death of Tintagel*, Wedekind's *The Vampire* and *The Victory of Death*, and Hugo von Hoffmannsthal's *Elektra*. But after serving in the Red Army, and being captured by the Whites, he turned Communist. The function of the theatre, he declared, was to "initiate the workers into the truth of Communism"; the actor was "a social politician."

This creed in itself was death to art, but Meierhold has gone further. At this period the Russian worker was intoxicated by one thought—that he owned the machine he operated; and fired by this emancipation, Meierhold embraced "Bio-Mechanics" and the "construction" theory. He depicted the worker at his daily task, had scenery made of concrete, iron and glass, added triangles, circles, squares, and other geometrical designs, "put together according to their constructive meaning" (whatever that might be), and made his players deliver speeches while wielding a hammer or racing up and down ladders.

This was enough, and more than enough. But his imitators have outdone him. They have pulled down stages, encouraged audiences to interject and argue with the players, introduced the crudest filth for the purpose of lampooning kings and capitalists, and rewritten foreign masterpieces in the light of the class war. Even when Jackie Coogan, in the

rôle of a begging urchin, is rebuffed by a man in the street, the action of the film is held up in order that you may learn that this is the way the capitalists of the world treat the suffering poor. The dramatist and the producer are dead; the propagandist and the stage mechanic are supreme. Or as one of the enthusiasts puts it: "the æstheticist, painter, sculptor, poet, or any other is dead; the constructionalist takes his place. Beauty is dead; truth prevails."

You might write pages to show the sterility, the shallow stupidity of that argument; but it would all be wasted effort. Keats said it once and for all when he wrote:

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty; that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

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## IV. The Truth about Russia's Art Treasures

Amongst the many ideas cherished about Bolshevik Russia is this—that during the Revolution the Reds raged up and down the country in a mad orgy of destruction, smashing statues and ikons, slashing pictures and looting jewels and plate.

It is all quite wrong. While in Russia I was privileged to see many hundreds of valuable pictures and other *objets d'art*; and what I could not see for myself—for to make a thorough investigation into the subject would take months—I have learned on unimpeachable authority from others, more especially Sir Martin Conway, the well-known British authority on art. Russia's treasures are not only intact, but are being carefully preserved in art galleries and museums, and for the first time are being systematically catalogued.

Even the Crown Jewels, the sale of which abroad is continually being reported, are preserved in their entirety. In a building in Moscow is the Crown of All the Russias, supposed to be the most magnificent piece of jewellery in the world, with the great and glowing ruby brought from Peking in 1672, and the double row of pearls; guarded in the same building are the other jewels and crowns of the Czars, including the sceptre of the great Catherine, with the famous Orloff diamond, stolen from a Mysore temple by a French soldier 130 years ago, glittering at the head; and the museums of Moscow and Petrograd are packed with art treasures of every period and kind, in almost incredible profusion. In case I should be suspected of exaggeration let me quote Sir Martin Conway, whose opportunities were much greater than my own, and whose knowledge of art is infinitely wider.

"As I look back," he says, "there sparkle and shine in my memory incredible quantities of jewels, masses of plate measured rather by tons than by numbers, countless quantities of porcelain filling gallery after gallery and leaving yet 75,000 pieces for which exhibition room cannot be found. I also recall great vases and tables, and even walls, of lapis lazuli and malachite, statues and busts, antique and modern, upwards of 20,000 pictures, vast collections of drawings and engravings, endless suites of furniture, walls covered with tapestries and carpeted floors by the acre; ikons by the thousand, sheeted with embossed cover of silver-gilt and enamel, antiquities of all periods, including some 10,000 objects in gold, yielded up from the soil of South Russia, state carriages and armour vestments and robes heavy with pearls, books in

golden bindings, chalices and crystal cups, engraved gems, crowns and sceptres and historical costumes, libraries of illuminated manuscripts and early printed books, and every object that the genius of man has brought into existence and his decorative instincts have embellished."

All these bewildering treasures were acquired by the Czars and leading private collectors. Peter the Great and Catherine the Great were responsible for the importation of scores of paintings, mostly French, and other rulers and noblemen, such as the Stroganovs, have since acquired enormous collections representing the art of almost every country and all periods. When the Revolution came all these were confiscated by the State and are now preserved as public property (in some cases with the original owners as caretakers or curators), in the Kremlin, the Tretiakowskaia Gallery, the Museum of Alexander the Third (all in Moscow), and the Winter Palace, the Palaces of Tsarskoe Selo and Gatchina, and the famous Hermitage in Petrograd.

Some slight damage or loss there may have been. When the Palace of Gatchina was stormed, for instance, a well-known portrait of the late Czar was slashed. But the same crowd did not touch the other valuables, and did so little damage that the room had only to be tidied up to reveal no trace of the storm that had passed through. And this was typical of events elsewhere. In justice to the revolutionaries it must be said that, far from indulging in the excesses of which the world heard so much, they preserved an orderliness and respect for valuable property unprecedented in all the disturbances of history. The Winter Palace was stormed, the Palace of Gatchina invaded by a

horde seeking the fugitive Kerensky, and the Kremlin at Moscow was shelled. And yet, so far as is known, no genuine treasure was stolen or even seriously damaged. You have only to contrast this record with that of the French revolutionaries who looted Chartres, Rheims, and St. Denys, or the record of the Germans in France and Belgium, to realize that in this respect at least the world has done the Russian revolutionaries a serious injustice.

Something must also be said in praise of the curators who showed such devotion during the storm and have since done such splendid work on miserable pay. The fact that they resolutely stayed at their posts, when others were flying for their lives, undoubtedly helped to account for the immunity of the galleries and museums.

The only relics that suffered much were the ikons—religious paintings, usually ornamented with gold and silver, which are hung in churches and homes. But here also there has been a great deal of exaggeration. Though many ikons were admittedly stripped of their precious metals by order of an impoverished Treasury, the whole thing was done systematically and the pictures themselves were not damaged.

Many, in fact, were improved. Owing to the practice of leaving only the face bare on the canvas, and superimposing head-dress and mantles of metal, the greater part of the painting was hidden, and it is only now that the real beauty of the work is being revealed. The pictures also suffered terribly from the re-painting that has been going on for centuries. As soon as an ikon dulled a little with age it was given to an artist to touch up, and in many cases he did not content himself with retouching the original, but painted it out altogether

and substituted something entirely different. Thus it has been found that a poorly painted Virgin and Child may hide quite a beautiful head of Christ.

Thanks to the present cleansing process, carried out with the fixed rule that no matter what the condition of the original may be there is to be no re-touching, a number of genuine masterpieces have been discovered. Some date as far back as the fifth century, and a new light is being thrown on the culture of early Byzantium and that Eastern Empire from which Russia has inherited so much in the way of language, religion and art.

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**V. The Renaissance of Faith**

It is at first sight a curious paradox that Russia, the one civilized country where the ruling caste is definitely anti-Christian, is to-day the most pious country in the world. Everywhere you find overflowing churches, a new respect for the priesthood and other signs of a great religious renaissance.

It is a remarkable development, this tremendous revival of Christianity, as represented by the Greek Orthodox Church ; but it is only what a student of history would have expected. All through the ages faiths have endured and prospered under persecution, and so it has been with revolutionary Russia. The Moscow communists began, as the French revolutionaries began, by dethroning God and trying to substitute a pale abstraction. They tried to abolish the Orthodox Church, which they regarded as a stronghold of conservatism and a bulwark of the old regime, and by way of a sop to those old-fashioned souls who still felt the need for a church of some sort, established a rival institu-

tion where a subsidized priesthood could preach the Communist creed. This was called the Living Church, the theory being that whereas the old Church was as dust and ashes in the people's mouths, the new Church would come into intimate contact with the masses in their homes and everyday lives.

If the Communists imagined that the people would flock to this new Government department to receive their daily or weekly dole of salvation and propaganda, they have by now been disillusioned. No matter in what part of Russia you attend services you find the new churches practically empty, the others filled to overflowing. The Dead Church is living and the Living Church is dead.

I talked about religion to Russians of all classes, and they all gave much the same explanation of the recent revival of faith. The persecution of the priests, they told me, had won them the sympathy of millions who once disliked their bigotry and ignorance, and the attempt to suppress Christianity had stimulated interest and belief amongst many who had been drifting towards agnosticism.

"I was never a regular church-goer before the Revolution," one lady told me. "Now I seldom miss a service. It is not that I have changed my beliefs, for even now I find it hard to accept the orthodox creed without certain reservations. It is simply that I like the comfort that the Church brings—the feeling that, however uncertain life may be outside, and however troubled one's soul, there one may find peace, rest and consolation."

That evening I accompanied her to a service in a little white church not far from the Bolshoy Theatre. Here, as the spirit of the place descended

like some soft and warming mantle, it was easy to understand the re-birth of Russia's religion. Outside were poverty, hardship, sickness, anxiety, a constant struggle for daily bread. Within were peace, calm, and the courage and new hope that are born in the hearts of troubled men and women when they fancy God is near. The booming basso of the priest carried a message of strength, faith and good cheer, and the atmosphere of spiritual rejoicing was complete when, from the galleries above, there came a glorious full-throated chorus of praise for the God who still reigns even over Red Russia.

So much for the present. But what of the future? Will the Communists, having failed so signally to destroy the Christianity of this generation, achieve their end by undermining the beliefs of the next?

I am inclined to think that to a very large extent they will. By constant propaganda in the schools they have already killed the religion of millions of young and impressionable Russians; and when these children reach maturity and begin to have children of their own, the overthrow of Christianity, failing some change of Governmental policy, should be fairly complete.

Communists tell you, of course, that in Russia all religions are tolerated and that every child is free to choose that which suits him best. But this assurance has as much value as those ironical phrases in the constitution which promise "effective liberty of opinion," "complete freedom of meeting" and "full liberty of association." It is true that there is supposed to be no religious or anti-religious instruction until the child has reached the age of 18, by which time he is theoretically

capable of judging for himself. Actually the whole structure of Christianity is being attacked with all the skill, patience and unscrupulousness that distinguish the Soviet's campaigns in the realm of international politics. Though a belief in Christianity is not an offence, men find that they get on better, especially in the Government, if they drop their religion and accept the Communist creed; and the Russian boy and girl, reared in an atmosphere of atheism and anti-religious feeling, are growing up entirely irreligious.

This system was not established in the schools without some resistance. The average Russian, more especially the peasant, is essentially conservative, and still retains his belief—hidden perhaps, but deep-rooted—in the creed of his Church and the God of his fathers.

But from the struggle that ensued the Communist teacher emerged triumphant. Systematically, as is the Communist way, he set about the task of undermining the position of the parents in their own home, and four times out of five he succeeded. Children to-day, having been taught to regard their father and mother as doddering reactionaries and objects or derision, jeer at any attempt to enforce parental control. Some refuse to speak to their parents or in any way acknowledge their existence—beyond, of course, condescending to accept shelter, food and clothes. And children have even been known to spy upon their father and mother and report to the Communist teacher anything that savoured of disloyalty to the cause.

Is it any wonder that numbers of young Russian men and women told me they had no intention of marrying?

"Why should we marry," they asked, "when we can only bring into the world children who will scoff at everything we hold sacred and despise their father and mother as they despise their God?"

## JOURNEY'S END

AT Moscow, for the purposes of this book, my journey ends. How I left Moscow in a hurry because I could not get an extension of my visa ; how a Russian conductor on the way to Riga answered my halting Russian in broad Scots, and confided to me that, after Russia, Glasgow again would be "nae sa bad " ; how I nearly died in Riga, but lived to pass on to Latvia, Esthonia, Poland, Germany and Holland, and cross the Straits of Dover—all this was not without its interest for me, but would probably be a little wearying to you. Nor will I moralize about the things I saw or draw the usual comparison between the lands I passed through in the course of my 20,000 mile journey, or bore you with statistics.

It was all very interesting, even exciting, to me, and I would not have missed it for a fortune. But one can have a surfeit of wandering, and I thanked God most heartily when the strain of it was over. I am not an Englishman, and had never before been on English soil ; but when I stepped ashore at Folkestone, ill and very tired, and heard a cheerful voice cry, "This w'y, sir," I felt that I was Home.

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